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GST INCLUSIVE

"The Time For Change Is Now" — Rasic

By Mark Stavroulakis

One of Australia's most respected officials, soccer personalities Rale Rasic came forth and stated his intellectual opinion on the ongoings at Australia's soccer association.

Having been the only coach ever to lead Australia towards a World Cup in Germany 1974, Rasic believed that the new Frank Lowy led group would be for the better of the game, but required a lot attention.

"I pose the question to Frank Lowy, would he do what Kerry Packer did with the sport of Cricket? Many people wondered whether cricket would be one of the best loved sports in this country but under Packer, it achieved a high status. That points to the question, will soccer become a professional sport in this country? I know that with Frank Lowy in charge this will certainly revolutionize the sport. I believe that he along with household names that have been mentioned like John O'Neill and Dr Vengalos will pick up the code. One man that could also be targeted is the great Bora Mulinovic as well as his experience speaks for itself".

At this current moment, it's believed that a ten-team competition will take place for the new and reformed league.

However, there have been a few cases that new clubs

and ventures have put forward their proposals for a hopeful entry towards next year's competition.

"We need to determine which teams will be in and out as soon as possible. In order for the league to gain sponsors and gain the attention it deserves, the league must know which clubs will take part. We still don't even have a name for the new league. The league in its current state is totally unbalanced. Some clubs are seen spending \$2.5 million against clubs who are spending \$350,000 to \$500,000, yet the current league standing has proved indifferent results. The public are talking about the success so far of Adelaide United, why not copy their model? Perth Glory without a doubt have been one of the main success stories in the Australian game, its fantastic marketing strategy, considering it's the only club from W.A. has really worked wonders".

"The new league could go one of two ways — it could become an elite competition or it could develop a Super League concept from across Australia".

Rale believes that Australia should take on advice off a rival country like the U.S. (which Rale has spent time in) that has been at the crossroads in promoting soccer.

"You cannot go past the Major League Soccer model in the United States. At one stage the sport looked like it was falling apart but it has once again surged itself as one of the best sports in the U.S. Its success speaks for"

itself, I've even heard that the MLS have plans for having a second professional league. The sport took off in a huge way after USA '98', and the country never looked back. From senior level to junior, they have improved immensely. Scouting talent at as little as 15-year-old's from respective college sides is the reason the U.S. are getting stronger. Look at Freddy Adu. At 14, he's already signed a professional deal with DC United and is regarded as one of the best talents in the world".

Neighbours ASIA, who have been targeted as possible helpers to the Australian soccer cause in Rasic's eyes believes would take time to ask for their approval.

"It's no secret that the Asian sector do not respect us on a world class stage, it's a simple as that. We need to do something extraordinary to attract the attention of the Asian market".

Away from the reform issue, one such topic that irked Rasic for quite some time was the fact that experienced coaches were never asked their opinions on dealings with respective National Teams.

"I'll give you one prime example of a coach that has been one of the most successful since the start of the Australian soccer league — Zoran Matic.

(Continued On Page 2)



Rale Rasic: One of Australia's most respected sporting personalities knows that Frank Lowy will over-turn the sport in a better way.

URUKALO NEW COACH OF AFRICAN CHAMPIONS

By John Economos
Exclusive

MICHAEL URUKALO, the globe-trotting former coach of A.P.I.A. Leichhardt and Sydney Olympic's Youth team, has just been installed as the new Head Coach/Manager of recently crowned African Champions League side, Enyimba International F.C. of Nigeria.

Enyimba International, based in Aba, Nigeria, broke an almost 40 year hoodoo to ultimately win the African Champions League.

In the two legged torrid final against the crack Egyptian outfit Ismaili, the Nigerian side took out the African Champions League title 2-1 on aggregate, having won the first leg at home, 2-0.

However the second leg in Egypt, was an ugly, torrid



Scenes from crowd riots inside the jammed packed Ismailia Stadium in Egypt.

and violent affair, (on and off the pitch), which saw the Nigerians gallantly hold out for a 1-0 loss (66th minute penalty), to snatch a historic, first-ever African League title.

The second leg of the Final was marred by frequent

violent tackling with massive crowd disturbances exploding around the Stadium after fulltime.

The Nigerians, team bus and official cars were destroyed and there was a three hour hold up before the official presentation could be

Finals, he's involvement was as the Nigerians, Technical Coach. However Urukalo's installation as Head coach/Manager very soon after the Nigerians, victory, was made under most controversial circumstances as the Australian replaced incumbent local coach, Kadiri Ikhana.

Ikhana was still the coach. He was dismissed for various reasons by the Club's management.

Coach/Manager of Enyimba International F.C.

"I was appointed as Technical Coach for the Champions League Final while Ikhana was still the coach. He was dismissed for various reasons by the Club's management.

"I have been signed up by the Governor Kalu who is the owner, as well the financier of the Club. Ikhana, (outgoing coach), was fully aware of my presence over the last four weeks.

(Continued on page 3)

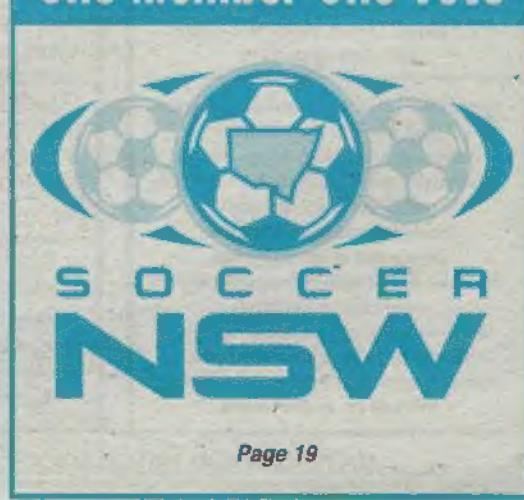
violent tackling with massive crowd disturbances exploding around the Stadium after fulltime.

The Nigerians, team bus and official cars were destroyed and there was a three hour hold up before the official presentation could be

made. Urukalo, as well as officials from the CAF, FIFA, UEFA plus the Asian FC were herded into security rooms to escape the violent and hostile crowd scenes erupting outside.

Although Urukalo was not the actual coach in the two

TOM DOUMANIS:
"One Member One Vote"



Page 19

Sapphires Take Out WNSL Final

See Page 5

Plus all Round 15 National League action with reports and statistics alongside ABSW's weekly gossip column 'From The Dressing Sheds'. Colour Page specials on Javier Saviola and Alessandro Del Piero.

Don't Forget - Next Week's Issue will see stories on Wollongong's Nigerian goal machine Chima Nwaogazi, work-a-holic Nahuel Arrarte and Australia's next up-and coming star Alex Brosque who could make a move next year overseas - Plus Loads More!

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BY DANIEL KUZIOW

Leeds United caretaker boss
Eddie Gray has stressed
Mark Viduka's importance to
the Leeds survival cause.The Australian international,
who had several bust-ups with
former boss Peter Reid, is
beginning to enjoy his football
again under a new managerial
regime.The Aussie is crucial to
Gray's strategy. With Alan
Smith deployed in a withdrawn
role to help out in midfield,
Viduka has been asked to
plough a lone furrow in attack, a
task he has taken to with
admirable zest."Goalscorers do worry when
the goals aren't coming, but I
just said to him at half-time
"keep going and the goals will
come for you," Gray told the
club's official website."So I was delighted to see
Mark Viduka score. Once he
starts scoring goals to go with
everything else he's got, we're
dangerous."He's important to us in the
system we are playing at the
moment because he holds the
ball up and he lets the two
young wide boys support him
and he plays in the boys in the
middle of the park, plus he
scored a great goal."His great strength is holding
the ball up for others on the
edge of the box. I have to say
that since I have come back to
the club, Mark has been terrific."

★ ★ ★

Walsall's Steve Corica is set
to miss his club's crucial
games over the Christmas and
New Year period after pulling a
hamstring midway through last
week's game against
Wimbledon.The midfielder had been
showing his best form so far this
season but a scan on the problem
last week highlighted the
full extent of the injury.The Australian is resigned to
being out for at least month,
sidelining him for at least sixleague games as well as the FA
Cup visit to Millwall on January
3."It is disappointing because
things had been going okay for
me recently," Corica told
icbirmingham.com."I had started the last few
games and that's satisfying in
itself bearing in mind the com-
petition for places we have in
midfield."But as soon as I did the
injury I knew there was a prob-
lem. I stretched for the ball and
felt my hamstring go 'pop'."I'll know more when the
scan results come through but it
looks like four to six weeks out.
I think the best case scenario is
to be back in training in two."I'll just have to be patient
because you can't hurry injuries.
But it is frustrating."because I've been on the outside
unable to help the team."But I'm feeling better and I
just want to get back on the
pitch and try to influence the
side again."

★ ★ ★

Oldham goalkeeper Les
Pogliacomi has conceded
he is far from happy with his
current form.The 27-year-old Australian
was voted player of the year at
Boundary Park last season after
letting in just 53 goals in 56
matches.But the Latics have since sold
off key defenders Fitz Hall,
Chris Armstrong and Clint Hill
and Pogliacomi has already con-
ceded 43 goals in 25 matches
this time around."I'm not happy with my
game at the moment,"
Pogliacomi told the *Manchester
Evening News*. "I don't know
what to do next. I am at odds
with myself."I set my standards high and I
don't want to be playing in
peaks and troughs, I want con-
sistency."

★ ★ ★

Another injured Socceroo-
Rangers captain Craig
Moore is confident his side will
turn around their miserable form
of late that saw them crash out
of the Champion League and
suffer defeat to Dunfermline.Moore has been sidelined for
a lengthy period of time with a
hamstring injury but is confident
his side can regain their top
form and he has vowed his
return is not too far away.He told *Soccer365*: "I can
guarantee that I will be back
playing football very soon. I
have done a lot of hard work in
the last two or three weeks and
my fitness has come a long way
in that time."I feel a lot better and hope-
fully it won't be too long before
I'm back playing again.""It has been disappointing to
be injured and miss the big
games. The squad has been test-
ed to the full recently but hard
work will get us through this
sticky spell and there is a lot
better to come from us."Personally, it has been very
disappointing for me as it's been
stop-start for me this season.

"There has been frustration

The Scotsman have reported
that Motherwell have given a
trial to 20-year-old Australian
striker Scott MacDonald.Manager Terry Butcher is
looking at free agent McDonald
as a possible solution to the Fir
Park club's recent poor form,
which has seen them lose their
last three matches in the Premier
League, against Hibs, Partick
Thistle and Kilmarnock.The Australian under-20 cap-
tain was one of the stars of the
Youth World Cup in Dubai and
was previously at Southampton,
but never made it into the first-
team plans of Gordon Strachan.If they decide to move for
McDonald, who holds a British
passport, Motherwell will face
competition from Huddersfield,
where he had a successful loan
spell.South American football in all honesty. If not that
some major homework on these nations needs to be
done. The question is, is it much easier to play with
a libero or flat back four? Players can learn when
one player dictates the teams in a reshuffling situation.
Reshuffling takes much longer to see the end
result. Look at the old Dutch side, Holland were
most successful under the great Krol as libero.
Prior to that, the Dutch did not play so well. Just a
simple note to think about".The technical mentor believes that the success in
WC 2002 of countries such as South Korea- Japan
- Turkey and Senegal should be dwelled upon by
the Roos."Special attention to these countries mentioned
above should be paid to this soccer phenomenon.
In the past, Australia was always far too superior
over South Korea. The Koreans sacked their coach
in '98 after its humiliating loss to the Dutch six-one
then Guus Hiddink was put in place. This move
proved wonders for the nation, the glory was
shared from its huge World Cup profits alongside
its stature as being a tough nation from Asia".One quote that will sit firmly as one of the best
comments ever made by any manager from across
the globe was stated by Rasic back in '74."Great players don't make great teams, great
people do", Rale Rasic - taken from the book
'Football: The Beautiful Game'Makrys who is also playing
under former Socceroo Steve
O'Connor, says he has played a
instrumental part of the teams
success, "he's a good coach,
he's been there and done that
and knows what he's talking
about.""Personally I have really
learned a lot from him and the
AIS program."With his skills, determination
and taking to Italy what he
learned from the Nations
Capital hopefully we will have
another Aussie abroad, "yeah I
leave in January to trial in Italy
with Empoli and should be really
exciting, I'm just going to try
my best and hopefully I can
impress them."Makrys will not feel alone
whilst at Empoli as he will join
two regular Australian
Primavera players Nicholas
Stavroulakis and Frank Lagana.
The pair have made an enormous
impact on the side's Primavera
squad and have gained the attention of the new
first team coach.

*By Franco Mula

Phil Makrys is off for
trials in Italy with Serie A
side Empoli.COMMERCIAL/OFFICE
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Gelonesi to fight

Northern Spirit majority shareholder Antonio Gelonesi hasn't given up on the club.

Gelonesi, who called in the administrators last week, will hold talks with Australian Soccer Association officials and is already talking about building a new club.

"The best way for the club to go forward was to end the relationship with Glasgow



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Spirit's chairman Antonio Gelonesi will not give up the Northern Spirit venture.

players and I will be meeting with them (ASA) along with the administrator on Monday and I hope they give us their blessing.

"My company is looking at being involved in the new league and I have already been approached by others businessmen."

OFC PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD UP FOR GRABS

By Mark Stavroulakis

In conjunction with French star Zinedine Zidane winning this year's FIFA Player of the Year award came the press release from one of Australia's most respected journalists of all time, Ted Simmons about this year's Player of the Year from Oceania.

Australia's very own Brett

Emerton was the worthy winner of last year's award, and justifiably so, the tough working midfielder had a great year with Dutch side Feyenoord before jetting off to Blackburn Rovers.

This season, 26 nominees have been selected by a panel of Oceania experts from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, New Caledonia, Tonga, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti and Vanuatu in spear-

heading who they believe will be this year's number one player.

Selected media representatives from around the Oceania region will be voters of this monumental award with the winner being announced on the 30th of January next year.

Readers here is the strong 26 list of nominees, take your pick on who should win:

(In no particular order)

1. Mark Viduka
2. Vince Grella
3. Zeljko Kalac
4. Harry Kewell
5. Esala Masi
6. Salesh Kumar
7. Varesa Toma
8. Ryan Nelsen
9. Mark Paston
10. Raf de Gregorio
11. Jean Marc-Case
12. Andre Sinedo
13. Reginald Davani
14. Desmond Faauua
15. Henry Fa'Arodo
16. Richard Daniel
17. Pasi Schwalger
18. Commins Menapi
19. Alick Maemae
20. Marama Vahirua
21. Ramon Djamali
22. Felix Tagawa
23. Ipeni Fonua
24. Graham Demas
25. Jean Presley Grace
26. Jean Emmanuel Maleb

(Leeds Utd - Australia)
(Empoli - Australia)
(Perugia - Australia)
(Liverpool - Australia)
(Newcastle Utd - Fiji)
(Ba - Fiji)
(Nadi - Fiji)
(DC United - NZ)
(Bradford City - NZ)
(Jokerit - NZ)
(AS Mont Dore - New Caledonia)
(AS Magenta - New Caledonia)
(North Shore Utd - PNG)
(Lapea, Samoa)
(Melbourne Knights - Solomon Islands)
(Sobou - PNG)
(Preston - Samoa)
(Marist - Solomon Islands)
(Koloale - Solomon Islands)
(FC Nantes - Tahiti)
(Manu Ura - Tahiti)
(Dragon - Tahiti)
(Atata - Tonga)
(Tafea - Vanuatu)
(Amical - Vanuatu)
(Amical - Vanuatu)

Urukalo New Coach Of African Champions

(Continued from front page)

"During that time many attempts had been made to discredit my presence, technical involvement as well as tactical contribution to the team for the Final," Urukalo underlined.

"I was in Aba (Nigeria), as well as in Egypt, for both legs of the Final."

"I signed a very good contract with Enyimba F.C. and they have already

paid me a sign-on fee plus three months advance salary in US dollars," Urukalo confirmed to us.

The Australian coach will make a dash back to Sydney on Boxing Day before returning to Nigeria on the 2nd of January.

Australia in recent years has been exporting players, now it's very pleasing to see she's exporting coaches.



Michael Urukalo-Newly appointed coach of African Champions.





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Game 5 - FA CUP ROUND FIVE (Game TBC in January)

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Who will be this year's OFC player of the year? (L-R) Vince Grella - Commins Menapi - Henry Fa'Arodo or Felix Tagawa to name a few.

TOURNAMENT OF MIXED EMOTIONS

By Peter Damalas

A tournament of highs and lows," was how national youth coach, Ange Postecoglou, described the 2003 World Youth Championships from Australia's perspective.

Certainly an accurate summation as the Young Socceroos succumbed to hosts the United Arab Emirates in the second round after a "monumental" victory over favourites Brazil in the final round robin match.

A blunder from goalkeeper Nathan Coe late in the match against the hosts condemned Australia to defeat. A deflected shot from Ismail Matar crept under Coe's body in the 89th minute and sent the home crowd into delirium as they qualified for the quarter finals at the expense of Postecoglou's players.

Yet while the team missed out on an excellent chance to go on an extended run in the tournament, possibly to the semi-finals, Postecoglou was pleased with the way his players responded to tournament football.

"We did extremely well in the group phase. It was probably not expected that we would remain undefeated at the end of the first round," he said.

New Melbourne Corporate Club" for ASA

Australia will soon have its own version of Manchester United! A brand new Corporate Club" is to be formed to enter the new national Soccer competition.

The new Club will be Melbourne-based and will aim to capture the lion's share of the Victorian market, under the new geographically structured competition. The Club will be a company limited by shares and will initially raise approx \$5 million in equity capital to fund its entry into the new competition. It will operate as a public company from inception, with a prominent Board, and may seek a public listing on the Australian Stock Exchange within 2-3 years.

Former-Socceroo and Melbourne Knight, Steve Horvat is working closely with Investment Banking advisors to establish the new Melbourne soccer franchise.

"We are already in discussion with local and international personalities from the business, promotion, entertainment and soccer sectors," Horvat said.

"We will consider a wide range of potential investors, including AFL clubs, international soccer clubs, international Australian soccer players, Australian corporations and local sponsors, including parties seeking naming rights and / or merchandising rights."

The Melbourne Knights, currently part of the National Soccer League, is sponsoring the formation of the new club. Knights will contribute some of its assets, selected playing and coaching staff, business and operational systems and other business infrastructure as seed capital for the formation of the new entity.

The issue of venues for the game will be discussed with other Melbourne clubs and the ASA, including ground sharing arrangements with AFL or other Soccer Clubs.

"Under the new competition, we want to ensure that soccer draws regular crowds of 10,000-20,000 per game for a major

"We knew that our form was good but the surprise was the way we played against Brazil. It wasn't a scrappy, defensive effort."

Postecoglou also commented on the reaction after the 3-2 win over their South American opponents, a game in which Perth Glory's mid-fielder Anthony Danze scored two vital goals.

"It gave us belief and confidence and encouraged us not to fear or be scared of anyone. We took a lot of positives out of this - if we prepare well and have a good

champions Argentina 4-3, only to lose out at the next hurdle."

Postecoglou explained that while the players attempted to put the free scoring Brazil match out of their minds in the lead up, they were undone by a combination of factors, including the tighter nature of the game.

"We knew it would be tough, but we probably expected to get past the UAE. It was ultimately going to be decided by the one goal. While we did not play well, we were not really threatened by them defen-

"I would like to continue in this role, but for now I'll wait and see. I feel that the people who make comments are being mischievous. The changes being made at the ASA have convinced me that the future is bright, and I would like to be a part of it."

Ange Postecoglou

side, we can beat anyone," he said.

But the tournament ended abruptly for the talented squad that was expected to go on with the job. The loss to UAE mirrored the 1997 squad, which defeated eventual

sively until the final moments, and at that stage, there was no chance to come back," he said.

The absence of key mid-fielder Carl Valeri, the creative spark in the final third, and the 'peak too early' syndrome also inhibited Australia's chances.

With Brazil striding forward into the final despite their early loss, Postecoglou considered the difference between



Ange Postecoglou still wants to be part of Australia's coaching set-up as its youth coach.

Australia's preparation and that of the Latin nations, who have dominated both the Under 20s and Under 17s championships.

With the Oceania winner again set to

play off against the fifth placed South American nation on the road to the FIFA World Cup in Germany 2006, this was a perfect opportunity for Australia to have a close look at their future opponents.

Postecoglou attributed their domination of this age group to the emphasis on youth in the continent and the number of important fixtures played by the national teams.

"The Latin countries always do well. They play a lot of qualifiers and they learn how to deal with these pressure-filled games. We are not in this situation," he said.

But the coach nominated his first choice back four (Dilevski, Wilkinson, Tarka and Thwaite), creative players Valeri and Alex Brosque, and midfielders Matthew McKay and Dustin Wells, as players who enhanced their reputations during the tournament.

The issue of youth development has been discussed in the media and within the Crawford Report and the recent NSL Task Force findings.

The man in charge of the Joeys and Young Socceroos refuted claims that the lack of success at these levels in recent years is a symptom of the problems encountered in youth development.

"I think people are confusing the issue here, and they are making un-educated comments," Postecoglou said. "The team and the system are two separate issues. The problem for the Under 17s this year was the fact that not enough games were played and we did not travel overseas. The disruptions we have had over the past few months and the lack of money has affected all of our national teams."

"The youth set up has not changed in the past few years and I think it is a priority for it to continue as it is," he said.

Postecoglou also responded to speculation about his future with the national youth teams.

"I would like to continue in this role, but for now I'll wait and see. I feel that the people who make comments are being mischievous. The changes being made at the ASA have convinced me that the future is bright, and I would like to be a part of it," he said.

Find out more on the issue regarding a possible rumoured change at youth coaching level on 'From the dressing sheds' on Page 18.

Nwaogazi Attributes Performance To God

Wollongong Wolves man of the moment Chimaobi Nwaogazi has attributed his good performance in the NSL to God.

"The favour of God is on me." The Nigerian international told ABSW moments after his 47th minute goal had given the maximum points to Wolves at the expense of Sydney United last week.

"He(God) has turned my mourning into joy."

The former Udoji United hitman was apparently referring to the tragedy that struck his family when his father and brother died in Nigeria within a week recently.

The Nigerian adopted positive mental attitude during his trials and refused to be demoralised. Interestingly, he worked so hard and he did not hesitate to dedicate his goals to his girl friend Zee.

"She is an inspiration to me, very supportive both morally and financially. She has always been there for me. To me, she is the moral booster. She gives me the moral boost even when I did not want to do anything. I will keep on scoring for her."

"God gave me the strength. I prayed and prayed. So, I have been working very hard. At the moment, I'm not struggling to be the highest goal scorer in the league but to work hard to ensure that we do well in our matches. However, I want to make my marks in the goal scorers' chart. Thank God, I'm getting the support of every one in the team and I'm gradually getting to know the Australian system."

Nwaogazi who now has four goals to his credit has the full backing of his Coach, John Turner.

"Chima has shown a lot of courage and he has come a long way in the past six weeks." Turner whose admiration for the goal scorer has increased said.

Calleja's Best Assistant

Wollongong Wolves sweat merchant, John Turner has hailed his assistant John Calleja as "the best I have seen in my coaching career."

According to him, "I have been in the coaching business for 30 years and I have worked with an assistant better than John. He knows his job very well and his attitude to work is just excellent. This is my first year of working with him and I believe he's a blessing to our team."

"Both of us have really worked hard for these boys and I must tell you that we are not disappointed in them. We asked them to believe in themselves and they are doing that."

Calleja, an ex coach of Parramatta Eagles is happy to be the Wolves.

"We are like a happy family and we hope to continue with the pace we are going." He said.

The former Champions seem to have recovered from their lack-lustre performance at the beginning season.



Steve Horvat is working closely in promoting a new club in Melbourne for next year's APL.

WNSL 2003/04 GRAND FINAL

Sapphires Finally Break the Hoodoo

NSW Sapphires 3

(Sally Shipard 39', Michelle Carney 55', Leah Blayney 85')

Queensland Sting 1

(Belinda Dawney 90'+)

at Lions Stadium, Brisbane



Action shown from last week's Women's final in Queensland.

By Janene Mar

NSW Sapphires are the WNSL champions after a solid 3-1 victory over favourites Queensland Sting in Saturday night's grandfinal at Queensland Lions Soccer Club in Brisbane, finally reversing their fortunes after three consecutive grandfinal losses.

The young NSW Sapphires, with six 15 to 18 year-olds in their starting lineup, were hungry to get the result and they met the challenge in fine style against the widely internationally experienced Queensland Sting. The win is Sapphires' third national league crown. Queensland, the defending champions, saw their perfect grandfinal record come to an end, having won three titles from three appearances.

In a game which saw both sides enjoy a share of the possession and chances on goal, NSW in the end deserved their victory, making the most of their opportunities and displaying sharp combinations all over the park, fantastic intensity and hunger. Sting squandered some solid chances on goal, as it wasn't to be their night.

Sapphires started the championship decider in early attacking mood, although it was Sting with the first good chance in the 3rd minute when Belinda Dawney sent her shot from wide on the right sailing over the bar. Not long after, NSW almost grabbed the early lead after an error in judgement from the home side goalkeeper.

Being played at a frantic pace, the situation then evened out with play switching from one end to the other for a while, before Sting then took the ascendancy to create several shots on goal. April

their lead, which silenced the hometown fans. A scramble inside the box saw the defence clear the ball only as far as Sapphires captain Taryn Rockall just outside the 18-yard box who sent in a neat chip over the top for Carney to win the race between herself and the outrushing goalkeeper to get her toe in for the shot.

Sting's Heather Garrick, sidelined for several matches due to back injury, was immediately brought into the action, and several chances were created in their desperate mission to get back into the game, but Dawney, Mann, and Garrick still had no luck finding their range on goal.

In the 85th minute, NSW put the nail in the coffin when Kylie Ledbrook released Catherine Cannuli up the left but her two chances in quick succession were both saved by goalkeeper Belinda Kitching leaving teammate Leah Blayney on hand to put away the loose ball from 8 metres.

The home side, refused to give up and fought on to the end. Substitute Sarah Walsh, sent her shot wide of a gaping goal in the 88th minute. Finally in stoppage time, Queensland were able to find the back of the net for what was no more than a consolation goal, catching out the Sapphires defence with a switching ball out to the left and Garrick's cross was met with a well-timed side-volley by the unmarked Dawney from centre of goal.

Sapphires coach Alen Stajcic was relieved to have broken the team's run of outs, and delighted with the performance. "For the girls who've been here for the four years, this win is a big weight off their shoulders. That's been a real monkey on their backs, so it's great to have broken through that barrier. We're just

all so ecstatic."

"As individuals they all played well. And in this one-off grandfinal, a number of them played their best game I've seen them play - Lisa Gilbert, Taryn Rockall, Leah Blayney all had great games. It's fantastic the team's pulled out their best game at the most important time."

A disappointed Mike Mulvey, coach of the Queensland Sting who were aiming to make history as the first team to win back to back titles, said, "We just weren't able to take our chances."

Queensland Sting: Belinda Kitching (gk), Sarah Garven (Sarah Walsh 76), Karla Reuter, Pam Grant, Jessica Mitchell (Heather Garrick 55), Alicia Ferguson (Ellen Beaumont 82), Kate McShea (c), Bryony Duus (Kim Carroll 82), Lana Harch, April Mann (Elissia Canham 76), Belinda Dawney.



Aerial action shown between the Sapphires and the Sting.



SIMPLY THE BEST: NSW SAPPHIRES shown celebrating their Finals win over the QLD Sting.

WINNING QUOTES

Sapphires coach Alen Stajcic -

We went through the season undefeated as well, though we weren't as consistent as Queensland, but even games where we played badly, we were still able to eke out a draw. That shows the quality of a team when you can do that.

We were better mentally prepared for today than we have been for other matches.

With a young side, the team can be inconsistent, players get nervous, and other times show poor concentration.

Sapphires captain Taryn Rockall -

The feeling's just fantastic. It's been a long three years leading up to this one, so it's a good feeling for the girls.

Going into the game, I was hoping this wasn't going to be a fourth year (with a loss). I was quietly confident the squad we have this year would go out and win it, and they've obviously proved the point.

The one thing we did have to look at was during the season we were really only playing the second 45 minutes, so we knew playing Queensland we'd have to play the whole 90 minutes, and I think we did that. We came out in the first half and played hard and got up 1-0. Then we came out again in the second half and played the same way.

Catherine Cannuli.
Unused substitute - Monique Jackson (c).

Yellow Cards: Gilbert (NSWS) 43; Dawney (QS) 61.

Referee: Tammy Ogston;
Assistant Referees: Jacqueline Leleu, Airlie Keen
Fourth Official: Krystyna Szokolai.

GRANDFINAL STATISTICS

NSW's third women's national league crown, from their record six grandfinal appearances in the eight seasons of the competition.

The first time NSW has beaten Queensland to win a national league title.

The first time Queensland has lost a grandfinal.

Queensland Sting's first loss in 15 league matches, last going down in Round 7 of the 2002/03 season 2-0 to NSW Sapphires.

The first time the grandfinal winner has scored 3 goals inside normal time. Only once before has the winning team scored 3 goals, when NSWIS defeated SASI 3-2 in extra-time in the 1997/98 grandfinal in Sydney.

Only the second time the grandfinal has been won by a margin of more than one goal. SASI Pirates won the 1998/99 finale 2-0.

The third time the grandfinal has been won by the team who finished 2nd on the points ladder. Canberra Eclipse upset NSW Sapphires in 2001/02, and SASI Pirates did the same to Canberra Eclipse in 1998/99.



National Soccer League



Wollongong Wolves



Marconi Stallions

WOLLONGONG striker Chimabobi Nwaogazi scored for a club record equalling fifth straight game to snatch a dramatic draw with Marconi last Friday's NSL clash at WIN Stadium.

The in-form Nwaogazi scrambled in the equaliser nine minutes from fulltime after two-goal hero Stuart Young had his header rebound off the crossbar.

The Nigerian-born Nwaogazi has scored in his last five games to equal the consecutive scoring record also held by former Wolves

striker Saso Petrovski.

A see-sawing game saw Young score twice and Nick Carle twice for Marconi as the visitors trailed after just 85 seconds but lead with 14 minutes remaining through a goal by Alex Brosque.

Just seven minutes into the second half Carle put the visitors ahead, scrambling home a corner from almost under the Wolves' goal.

Brosque then missed a gilt-edged chance to give Marconi a two-goal buffer, spooning a reflex volley over the cross-bar after Wollongong goal keeper Andrew Crews saved brilliantly from Joe Spiteri.

Young gave the home side a dream start heading home Nahuel Arrarte's corner in just the second minute. Wollongong dominated the opening 25 minutes but Carle struck a blistering

equaliser for Marconi right on half time.

The goal clearly lifted Marconi and deflated Wollongong.

minutes after great work from Nwaogazi before Brosque put Marconi ahead 3-2, setting up the heroics for the Wolves' Nigerian striker.

Marconi coach Jean-Paul de Marigny said with his team leading twice they should have wrapped up the three points.

"I'm disappointed we didn't win," de Marigny said.

"We made two individual mistakes that cost us and I thought their second goal was five yards off side."

Wolves coach John Turner was also slightly dis-

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appointed to have only picked up a point.

"They led 2-1 and 3-2 in the second half but surrendered and I thought my boys showed great fighting qualities to grab a point," Turner said.

"But when you score three goals, you should get more than just a point. Defensively we made mistakes and that cost us dearly."

"But six goals in a game is fantastic entertainment."

Best players in a thrilling match were Wolves goal keeper Crews and striking partners Nwaogazi and Young for Wollongong while Carle was a live-wire in the Marconi midfield and Brosque showed his talents up front.

Source - AAP



Veteran Wolves skipper Stuart Young bagged a brace in their three-all draw with the Stallions last Friday evening.



Kingz



Sydney United

FOOTBALL KINGZ lost to Sydney United at Ericsson Stadium, had a player sent off and lost another to a serious head injury.

The injured player was central defender John Tambouras, who received seven stitches in his forehead after copping a boot as he

tried to head the ball.

United scored the only goal, through Labinot Haliti, minutes after Tambouras had been earned off and the Kingz' woes were increased when another defender, Glen Collins, received his marching orders early in the second half. The visitors have struggled to score goals this season

and it was easy to see why in the first half, which they dominated for long periods. The Kingz' woes were increased when another defender, Glen Collins, received his marching orders early in the second half. The visitors have struggled to score goals this season

But Sydney were either too elaborate or shot off target time after time.

They received 15 freekicks

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in the first half from referee James Lewis to the Kingz' four and still they were unable to get the ball into the net. Their best effort was a solo break by Franco Parisi, which was foiled by a diving save from Michael Utting.

The injury to Tambouras in the 40th minute was the turning point. He had been dominant in the air and also made a number of last-ditch tackles.

He tried to head a ball Zeljko Babic swung his boot at and received a gash on the forehead.

Babic was given a yellow card and Tambouras was replaced by Brad Scott, but the Kingz' defensive pattern was upset and in the fourth minute of injury time Haliti drove a loose ball through a wall of defenders to open the scoring.

Worse followed for the Kingz when Collins made a fairly innocuous challenge seven minutes into the second spell and was sent off for a second yellow-card offence.

The 10-man Kingz responded with some of their best football of the game, forced a couple of corners and Chris Jackson forced a save from Sydney goalie Liam Reddy.

Brendon Santalab wasted a couple of chances for Sydney as the visitors seemed more interested in preserving their lead.

Jackson and Harry Ngata toiled bravely in midfield but once again the battlers came off second best.

Source - AAP



Sydney United's Labinot Haliti was the sole goal-scorer in his side's one-nil away victory to the Kingz.

SPIRIT'S BLACK CHRISTMAS

By Mark Stavroulakis

The Christmas Spirit was certainly broken last week to NSL club Northern Spirit when the club was placed into liquidation after failing to resolve their financial difficulties with former partners and Scottish Premier League giants Glasgow Rangers.

Rangers, who had a 49 per cent share in the North Sydney-based club, according to Spirit chairman Antonio Gelonesi owed at least \$1.5 million dollars for two seasons relied on putting over a million dollars of his own into the club's survival.

It's true to say that the Rangers to inject \$10 million dollars

towards the Australian club but sought no reward in return with players or any incentive that the club would reap more benefits thus ending its relationship.

It's notable that last year's NSL coach of the year Lawrie McKenna does back one of the best youngsters in the business and only proved that when this year's U20 Young Socceroo squad was chosen.

Defenders Alex Wilkinson and Mark Milligan (did not travel to UAE due to injury) and Jonty Richter all made the squad.

Apart from these stars, strikers Adam Kwasnik, U23's hopeful Dylan Macallister, and promising stars Brad Groves, Brent Fisher, Matty Osman, Steven Baveas, Omar Obied, Matthew Hunter and Andrew Mailer have made some sought of contribution to the squad this season.



made even worse when Spirit's football manager Bill Collins, resigned last week putting administrator Alan Topp of Sydney firm Sims Partners in charge of the running of the club until further notice.

Timing couldn't have come at a worse time for the Spirit players who would have enjoyed their Christmas festivities with their family and friends.

Now all players will face the waiting game to see where all their future's hold with the club and their careers.

Apart from the youngsters, Scottish imports Ian Ferguson (Rangers Favourite) and Stewart Petrie will also feel the sting being flown to Australia from Scotland in a plight to start up a new life for their families.



National Soccer League



Parramatta Power



Adelaide United

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A superb second half rearguard defensive effort has earned Adelaide United and upset 2-1 win over Parramatta Power at Parramatta Stadium tonight.

Under the pump for most of the second half, the wall of white United shirts withstood everything thrown at them by the Power, the win catapulting them into the top-six.

It wasn't pretty by any standards, but given that most teams that have come to Parramatta Stadium so far this season have been on the end of hidings, the three points was well earned. The loss ended a 19-match unbeaten run at home by Parramatta that has lasted some 13 months.

The 30-40 strong Adelaide supporters group that travelled by bus to Sydney to watch the match, was also a breath of fresh air, with their non-stop singing and support for their team. In a way this win was as much for them as it was for the players.

Adelaide's game plan was

simple, harass and tackle hard in the midfield and break quickly with the ball in the hope of catching the Power defence napping. It worked a treat after 10 minutes, when the effective Ross Aloisi (pictured left) dispossessed

Matt Thompson 30 metres out and laid off to Aaron Veart made it 2-0. Goran Lozanovski created his run towards the box, received the return pass and despite the presence of two Power defenders was able to guide his shot past Clint Bolton from 12 yards out.

Power coach Nick Theodorakopoulos decided to hand new signing Sasho Petrovski his debut for the club and he could have been an instant hero less than a minute later when he should have equalised.

Receiving a pass from the very impressive Andre Gumprecht, Petrovski had time and space to pick his spot, but took one touch too many that allowed Adelaide goalkeeper David Scarsella to come out and block his shot at close range.

In the 17th minute, Parramatta had another

Theodorakopoulos decided to swap the two and

get Colosimo further into the action.

Adelaide did have the ball in the back of the net again in the 40th minute, when Veart appeared to scramble the ball home, but it was ruled away for Veart using his hand to push the ball over the line.

Parramatta's late pressure was rewarded with a goal of the highest quality a minute before the break. A superb long-range pass by Colosimo landed at the feet of Elrich on the right and his first time touch was placed perfectly in front of Gumprecht. Gumprecht took the ball to the by-line

where he supplied a superb cross to the far post, where Petrovski was waiting to place his shot into the back of the net.

The last play of the half almost produced an equaliser, when Elrich was put through, he capitalised on Scarsella's hesitancy by placing a low cross to the edge of the six yard box, which Fernando Rech just missed and then Lucas Pantelis saw his shot cleared off the line by Richard Alagich.

It was evident from the start of the second half that Power would do most of the attacking and they almost

equalised in the 50th minute. Rech's exquisite through ball found Milicic, who rounded Scarsella, but with the ball virtually on the by-line he only guided his shot into the side-netting. Milicic then had another chance a minute later when he climbed high to meet a Gumprecht cross but his glanced header was wide of the far post.

The pain continued for Milicic in the 58th minute, when he was denied a certain goal by a spectacular diving save from Scarsella after yet another terrific cross from Gumprecht, who by far Parramatta's best

player on the night.

Adelaide though had chances of their own when they were able to catch Parramatta on the break, with David Terminello shooting wide of the near post and Shane Thompson heading over the bar from seven yards out.

Michael Valkanis, who was a tower of strength at the back for Adelaide, almost put the ball in the back of his own net, after he deflected a powerful shot by Gumprecht past the post by inches.

Rech then hooked a shot over the bar from yet another Gumprecht cross, although for the most part, Parramatta was struggling to find a way through the wall of United defenders.

Adelaide substitute Adriano Pellegrino should have wrapped the game up with four minutes remaining, when he was able to meet an Aloisi cross from the right with a header, but Michael Beauchamp was able to clear the bouncing ball away.

They however managed to hold off Parramatta's late attacking thrusts and held on for a gutsy win.

Adelaide moved above Newcastle into sixth spot, while Parramatta will enter Christmas six points in arrears of leaders South Melbourne.

Source - SA



Michael Valkanis of Adelaide is challenged by new Power recruit Sasho Petrovski in Adelaide's shock two-one win.



Melbourne Knights

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Perth Glory

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By Alan Clark

Two goals from Nick Mrdja gave Perth Glory the win against Melbourne Knights at Somers Street on Sunday, lifting Glory to second in the NSL, with an awesome series of home-based fixtures still to come.

"We miss playing in front of our supporters, and we miss playing at home," said Glory coach Mitch D'Avray after the game as he considered the lop-sided fixture list that has his side playing almost all his remaining games in Perth, after spending the first half of the season as travellers.

"(But) I don't think it's going to be as easy as some people think. In Perth the expectations are so high - we are expected to win every game. There's a lot of pressure."

"Individual mistakes cost us," said Knights' coach Ian Dobson at the post-match

media conference.

"They've had four good scoring opportunities, and yet only created one of them as far as I was concerned."

The skies above Knights Stadium were dark both in reality and metaphorically. The western-suburbs club had earlier in the week indicated it would not seek admission into next year's revamped NSL ending a proud period of Knights competing at national level.

A long-threatened thunderstorm chose to break during the match sending buckets of rain into the faces of the players.

Glory was compelled to make two late changes to its starting eleven.

Bobby Despotovski had declined to make the trip across the Nullabor fearing his actions in a Somers Street match two seasons ago put his personal safety into jeopardy.

"We probably looked more dangerous when we were breaking from deep."

Glory's grip on the game was evident when it crafted a good opportunity just eleven

minutes in. Jade North had made good ground down the right before sending in a pinpoint cross to the penalty-spot. Mrdja rose highest and won a header under challenge which he directed low and to the post. Giant Knights' goalkeeper Vilson Knezevic belied his size and was smartly down to save.

The pressure eventually told, and although the goal was a surprise, the fact that it came from Glory was not. Just after the half-hour, Mrdja launched a left-foot 30 metre drive at the Knights' defenders backed off in front of him which arrowed into the top left corner. Knezevic was totally unable to react until it had whistled by him and smacked into the net. It was a stunning goal which will feature on Mrdja's highlights tape for many years.

"It was unstoppable," said D'Avray after the game. "I don't think any goalkeeper would have got that."

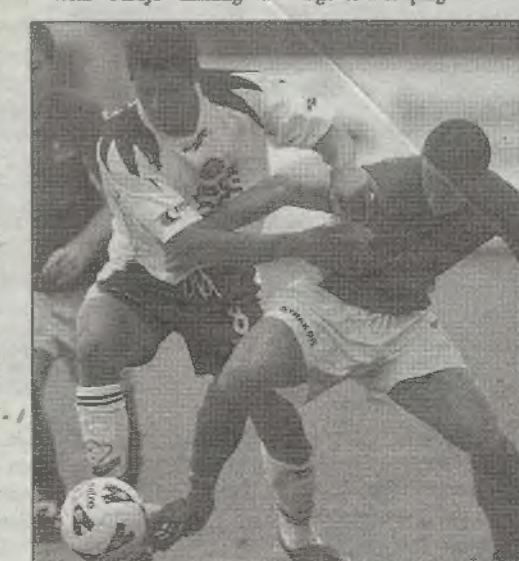
Just fifteen minutes before, Mrdja had indicated his intentions with a similar shot - this time on the turn from 20 metres - which flashed only centimetres by the post.

The first fifteen minutes of the second half was played in torrential rain. A storm,

threatened all afternoon, broke - seemingly directly above the stadium and making playing conditions extremely difficult.

As the sheets of water fell, Knezevic was compelled to dive full-stretch to divert a drive from Brad Hassell around the corner after a Knights' possession error gifted the ball to the burly mid-fielder mid-pitch.

With Mrdja making a



Perth's exciting young star and U20 international Anthony Danze shown tussling with Knights player Tomi Razov #11 for the ball during last Sunday's match in Melbourne.

Tomi Razov, Glory goalkeeper Jason Petkovic had to dive low to reach it.

Minutes later, tentative defending by Glory - perhaps unused to the grip of the game being wrested from its control - almost did for Knights what Knights could not do on its own account. Hassell dealt with a threatening situation by heading back to Petkovic, requiring the long-serving goalkeeper to leap and touch it over the bar.

"At one-nil at half-time we were in the game," said Dobson. "The twenty-minute spell after half-time we had good possession (creating) a couple of half-opportunities, but then we killed the game for ourselves by allowing that second goal."

The second goal put an end to Knights' prospects. Mrdja doubled the lead as well as his season's tally to date when he was first to a speculative high forward ball played by Scott Miller. Mrdja benefited from uncertain defending from Knezevic and Steve Pantelidis and sent his first-time volley low by Knezevic.

"(The win) was important," said D'Avray. "Because - with Mori and Despotovski out - we needed the players to stand up and be counted today."



National Soccer League



Sydney Olympic Brisbane Strikers

By Peter Damalas

A sublime piece of skill from midfielder Troy Halpin helped rescue a point for Sydney Olympic in their clash with the Brisbane Strikers at OKI Jubilee Stadium on Sunday afternoon.

Halpin fooled the stoic Brisbane defence with an audacious lob that found striker Jim Bakis in space on the inside right channel. The 24 year old made the most of an early Christmas present to bury the ball into the back of the net from close range.

This cancelled out an early opener from Brisbane's David Pilic, a reward for a first half of constant pressing in Olympic's territory.

The away side, which looked a great deal fitter than their hosts, were dangerous from the onset. Attacking midfielder Joshua Rose, who

turned twenty two last week, had two excellent opportunities to score, the second a volley that hit the left upright after a lobbed ball from captain Peter Grierson.

The goal seemed inevitable, and Pilic latched on to an intelligent through ball from right wing-back Steve Fitzsimmons to make the score 1-0 in the 12th minute.

Brisbane had all the angles covered, and their formation (which included two attacking midfielders supporting lone striker Brownlie) gave them the upper hand for the entire first half.

Halpin was frustrated at Olympic's inability to bring the ball out of their own half for extended periods, and clipped Fitzsimmons from behind in

another ill-disciplined tackle that probably deserved a yellow card.

Olympic simply did not

look like threatening the Strikers' defence, let alone scoring. Their best chance was a close range header from Bakis after a cross from the left by Michael Baird, who recently returned from Young Socceroo duty.

The equaliser came eight minutes into the second half, in the middle of a twenty minute period of sustained pressure from Olympic. The introduction of Hiroyuki Ishida on the right helped invigorate the team, and his low shot was tipped away by goalkeeper Scott Higgins.

The goal was as much about the assist as the finish. Halpin produced a moment of sheer inspiration to set up Bakis, third goal of the season.

Moments later, Baird looked to round off a splendid move which involved Goutzioulis, Halpin, Ishida and Fyfe on the left, but he

could not direct the header

and the second a scrambling effort which saw him divert the ball at Rose's feet.

Bakis had two difficult opportunities to secure an unlikely three points at the

death, however Brisbane created enough chances to win the match.



Olympic's new recruit George Goutzioulis did well in the side's midfield to earn the Blues a point at home to the Strikers.



Northern Spirit Newcastle United



Tom Libbesson of Newcastle United (left) contests the ball with John Hutchinson of the Spirit during the round fifteen NSL Soccer match between the Northern Spirit v Newcastle United.

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By Luke Doherty

Despite one of the most tumultuous weeks in the Northern Spirit's history they still managed to grab a share of the points in a 1-1 all draw with Newcastle United at Pittwater Park last Sunday.

The match almost didn't happen after the Spirit were forced into administration last Friday but chairman Antonio Gelonesi managed to come up with the necessary \$40 000 for the match to go ahead.

The club decided to split from its partnership with Scottish giants Rangers, who had a 49% share of the club.

The club is now in the hands of Alan Topp, of Sims Partners who are insolvent specialists.

Tribulations aside, Gelonesi promised his players and staff that they would receive payment for Sunday's match.

Gelonesi, who has poured

endless amounts of money into the Spirit franchise since their inception in 1998, is believed to have tabled an offer yesterday to the Australian Soccer Association which would allow the Spirit not only to continue for the rest of the season but also to be part of the re-structured 10 team league next season.

"I think that we have to be positive," McKinna said.

"We have to be because otherwise we have 25 players and staff out of a job."

"After Saturday's meeting it was all positive. We have a good bunch of players who have stuck by the club."

Newcastle were forced to re-shuffle their side after losing Robbie Middleby, John Perosh, Milan Blagojevic, Jobe Wheelhouse, Damien Brown, Peter Tsekenis and defender Adam Griffiths to injury.

The Spirit had the Young Socceroo trio of Alex Wilkinson, Jonathon Richter and Mark Milligan available for selection and Coach Lawrie McKinna had no hesitation in rushing them back into the starting line up.

Richter was a constant thorn in the side of Newcastle's right flank pairing of Scott Thomas and Josh Mitchell.

The exciting midfielder, who was forced to sit on the bench for most of the Australian U/20's world championship campaign, proved to be difficult to contain until he was substituted in the 85th minute with what looked like a back injury.

An Esala Masi goal sent Newcastle into the half time break with a one-nil lead after he headed a Peter McPherson free kick into the bottom right hand corner of the net in the 35th minute.

Masi appeared to have scored from a free kick again a minute before half time when he thumped the ball through the wall into the bottom left hand corner but the celebrations were cut short with referee Lennie disallowing the goal because it was an indirect free kick.

The Spirit's best chance of the half came from a Dylan Macallister header which crashed against the crossbar from a corner and somehow the ensuing melee in the six yard box didn't produce a goal.

Masi continued to torment the Spirit back four after half time, the Fijian captain showing what an aerial force he can be.

An unlikely own goal from Newcastle defender Mitchell Thompson levelled

the scores in the 62nd minute. Spirit striker Dylan Macallister made a surging run down the left flank and into the box before crossing the ball into the path of Thompson whose miss timed clearance rolled into the net.

"That was the break we needed," said McKinna, "It kept us in the game."

"If we had of fought that way in the last two games against Adelaide and Brisbane we would be travelling a lot better."

McKinna said that despite the future of the club currently balancing on a string, it wasn't getting to his squad before the match.

"Before the game the boys were relaxed and jovial," said McKinna, "maybe a little too light hearted."

Player Ratings

Newcastle United:

Thomas Willis 7, Craig Deans 7, Thomas Scott 7.5, Greg Owens 8, Mark Wilson 7, Ryan Griffiths 7, Mitchell Johnson 8, Esala Masi 9, Peter McPherson 8, Thomas Libbesson 8

Northern Spirit:

Paul Henderson 7.5, Julian Watts 7, Wayne O'Sullivan 7.5, Noel Spencer 7, Vuko Tomosevic 7.5, Dylan Macallister 8, Jonathan Richter 9, John Hutchinson 6, Stewart Petrie 8, Alex Wilkinson 8, Mark Milligan 7.

BYE - SOUTH MELBOURNE

WOLVES NEWS

By Otto Bader

Wolves Falter or Going Further? — recent positive results have lifted the team's position on the table, the player's confidence and coach John Turner's profile in soccer circles.

Can they maintain progress with every game coming — home or away — a test of character and consistency. Success in sport is a feeble hope — one day on a high, the next down in the dumps.

Coach John Turner specifies the situation as from "famine to feast" hoping the latter continues.

The boys and coach are now 'greedy' for more points having to stay on the right path, no relaxing at any time allowed. Training last week was restricted to two days only since playing on Sunday followed by a Friday game does not allow much rest to recuperate.

Youngster Jacob Timpano is sidelined with several minor injury problems receiving intensive treatment, replaced by another youngster Dustin Wells, just returned from the U/20's World Youth Championship.

10 Years Service — Thank You Alan sincerely — Alan Walton was appointed as director to the Illawarra Soccer Association on 12/12/1993 giving his volunteer service to soccer in various positions, since February 2000 as President of the ISA.

Some members of the Association are not aware of the endless hours Alan devoted to keep the smooth road of progress going.

As known in sports administrations very seldom one receives a 'thank you' — ask two previous ISA presidents Norm Flanagan and George Naylor before him, both staunch soccer people.

All had soccer at heart and donated their spare time without return of thanks. Alan Walton deserves a huge thanks from all soccer people having improved on previous standards in many aspects, he should be respected for his considerable contribution.

Alan started playing soccer with Balgownie Rangers Soccer club and after retiring as player took up refereeing for many years. This came to an end when he joined the ISA Board. Some matters taking up extra time were several visits during the year to Sydney to attend policy disputes and other issues at the NSW Soccer Federation headquarter as representative of Soccer Illawarra.

Alan also served at times to kick-start the Wollongong Wolves being a member of the NSL club committee and

still supports the Wolves, never missing a home game.

His various official requirements as attending functions, presentations, awards nights, addressing formal events whatever soccer activities demanded much of his time.

A sad loss for the soccer association shocked the local soccer fraternity when Alan was not re-elected at the AGM on Monday 15. December.

The 28 member clubs, life members, affiliated organizations and board members all had one vote, used a secret ballot and decided to give their confidence to another nominee, namely David Naylor, son of past ISA president George Naylor.

The numbers game comes up in most surprising ways in a democratic system and one has to accept the majority vote. Obvious the outcome does not please everybody however the result stands with no appeal possible.

A final expression of appreciation to the retiring director Alan Walton is a big thank you and please keep involved in soccer in a supportive manner. Alan — you still have many staunch friends out there in the cruel strange world of soccer.

NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE 2003-2004

NORTHERN DIVISION ROUND 15

LEAGUE LADDER

	P	W	D	B	L	F	A	Pts
Canberra Deakin	13	10	1	3	2	43	19	31
AIS	12	9	2	2	1	37	7	29
Parramatta Power	12	8	1	2	3	31	15	25
Marconi Stallions	13	7	2	2	4	22	17	23
Wollongong Wolves	10	6	0	2	4	18	14	18
Newcastle United	13	4	3	1	6	22	19	15
Northern Spirit	12	4	3	2	5	12	16	15
Sydney United	12	5	0	2	7	21	27	15
Brisbane Strikers	12	5	0	2	7	17	27	15
Sydney Olympic	12	4	2	2	6	26	28	14
QAS	12	2	2	2	8	19	34	8
ACTAS	11	0	0	2	11	5	50	0

ROUND 15 FIXTURE —

Rescheduled to be played on Saturday 17 January 2004

Parramatta Power vs QAS

BYE — ACTAS

BYE — Canberra Deakin

NATIONAL YOUTH LEAGUE 2003-2004

NORTHERN DIVISION

FIXTURES — ROUND 16

FRIDAY 26 DECEMBER 2003

ACTAS Vs Wollongong Wolves

Time: 5.00 pm

Venue: Hawker Oval

SATURDAY 27 DECEMBER 2003

Sydney Olympic Vs Northern Spirit

Time: 4.00 pm

Venue: OKI Jubilee Stadium

SUNDAY 28 DECEMBER 2003

Newcastle United Vs Marconi Stallions

Time: 4.00 pm

Venue: Energy Australia Stadium

BYE — Brisbane Strikers
BYE — Sydney United

FRIDAY 19 DECEMBER 2003

Wollongong Wolves 0 Marconi Stallions 1
(Cop 84')

SATURDAY 20 DECEMBER 2003

Sydney Olympic 3 Brisbane Strikers 1
(Elrich 42', Deane 51', Papaluka 76') (Woodruffe 11')Northern Spirit 1 Newcastle United 3
(Maller 72') (Own goal 31', Ryan 47', Bogdanovski 56')AIS 1 Sydney United 2
(Nedeljkovic 75') (Simic 79', Tresoglavac 92')

MATCH BROUGHT FORWARD FROM RD 18 —

Played on Friday 19 December 2003

Newcastle United 6 ACTAS 0
(Boogaard 23', 70', Wallace 49', Cowburn 65', Libbesson 66', Waters 88')

KNIGHTS OUT OF NEW REFORM

The Melbourne Knights have conceded to the realities of the new Australian soccer league by agreeing to become a feeder club for a consortium.

The Knights, with their narrow supporter base, modest facilities and finances, were at long odds to be part of Frank Lowy's new Australian league to begin in early 2005.

Instead they will retreat to the Victorian league while lending support, in terms of player development, to a new club that will bid for one of the two Melbourne franchises up for grabs in the new league.

Investment bank and consultancy group Cycam Pty Ltd is putting together the bid, which expected little difficulty in raising an initial \$500,000 to fund the bid and a further \$5 million as seed capital for the yet unnamed club.

The club would not identify itself with any particular area of Melbourne or any ethnic group, with the decision on a home ground and ownership to be made after further feedback from the new league on its financial model.

It had already begun discussions with some Victorian AFL clubs about

sharing facilities and expertise in administration and marketing.

Knights president Ange Cimera expected to get approval from members for the plan, as they realised it was not economically feasible to make a bid for the new league alone.

"We just can't run a club in the national league because the bar was set a little bit too high in terms of finances," Cimera said.

"We have to be realistic, we have to look at the gates we've had and the infrastructure.

"It's not because we're not good enough as a side, because we've proven we can match it with anybody, but this will give the members a chance to follow a team in both leagues."

Cimera said other current NSL clubs would do well to read the writing on the wall and follow the Knights' lead or face oblivion when not admitted to the new league.

"Aside from Perth Glory and maybe Adelaide, there is nobody else that will reach the new league and I'm sorry to say that includes South Melbourne," Cimera said.

"All the other clubs that don't make it have to become feeder clubs."



OFFSIDE WITH JULIAN WATTS

By Daniela Raco

DR: Your best footballing asset?

Experience.

DR: Describe your dance moves in three words.

Hip, hop, boga-loo....

DR: Pub grub or fine dining?

Pub grub.

DR: Most ad mire d sportsperson?

David Beckham.

DR: Sporting dream (non football)?

Formula One.

DR: Coach's favourite saying?

"It's not all doom and gloom".

DR: Favourite form of exercise?

Darts.

DR: Exercise/Drill you hate?

Running.

DR: What music fires you up?

Dance.

DR: What can't you live without?

Beer.

DR: Do you have a good luck charm?

I have a silver barrel necklace around my neck.

DR: Are you a boxers or a briefs guy?

Briefs.

DR: What makes you laugh?

Adam Kwasniki.

DR: What's under your bed?

Nothing.

DR: What's your golf handicap?

10.



Leading the Spirit charge at high voltage — Julian Watts.

DR: What is your score in the "Beep Test"?

13.3.

DR: Favourite holiday destination.

Maldives.

DR: Best hangover cure?

Beer.

DR: Dream car?

Ferrari.

DR: Favourite drink?

Beer.

DR: Favourite food?

Italian.

DR: Three guests you would have to a dinner party?

Cameron Diaz, Robbie Williams, Sir Alex Ferguson.

DR: What would you cook to impress?

Steak Diane.

DR: Most used appliance?

Bottle opener.

DR: Must-have power tool?

Electric cork screw.

DR: Have you ever used a chat-up line that worked?

Never.

DR: Favourite "Superhero"?

Spiderman.

WORD ASSOCIATIONS

Reality television: Big Brother.

Paris Hilton: Blond.

Nudity: Fantastic.

Light Beer: Homosexual.

Religion: Church of England.

Training: Poor.

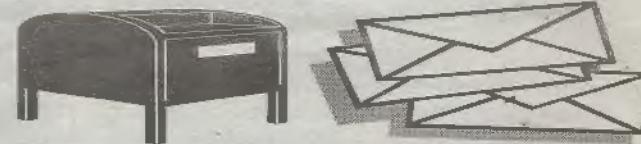
Media: Poorer.

Fast food: Pizza Hut.

Michael Jackson: Fraud.

Lawrie McKenna: Scottish.

Letters to the Editor



SIZE DOES NOT MATTER!

Dear Sir,

Recently, Harry Kewell and Frank Farina, publicly lamented at the inability of one of our Youth Teams to compete successfully on an International level. Their very harsh criticism was a result of a dismal Australian showing at the U17 World Youth Cup contested in Finland, where they came second last.

Frank Farina, in particular was disgusted by their lack of skills, from 16 teams they were voted last in technical ability.

Yet this poor result is not a surprise to anyone who has children involved in Representative Soccer. For many years we have seen coaches and those in the positions of authority espouse a policy of "bigger is better" whereby larger, taller, stronger kids are being selected on their size at the expense of kids who are smaller, faster and have considerably better ball skills.

A prominent coach and leader in Youth Soccer in Australia has been publicly quoted as saying "Pele, and Maradonna, wouldn't get into my academy and if they did they would be kicked out pretty quickly."

Who in their right mind would say NO to TWO of the greatest players to pulled on a pair of boots because they obviously were not big lumbering 6 foot 4 inch giants.

These monumental errors in Soccer Australia and Soccer NSW youth development strategy have clearly

come home to roost, the disaster at Finland provided this beyond a doubt. Yet this mistake continues to be perpetuated in junior premier league teams where coaches pick their teams with size in mind as a preference to skill. So that their teams win with physical intimidation and minimal skill.

At a recent trial for the Wollongong Wolves, I and many other parents witnessed many boys ruled out as they ran on to the pitch. From the sideline I could clearly see the head coach and the U/15 coach shaking and nodding their heads as the boys walked past them onto the field.

I and many others took this to mean "no" for the small kids and "yes" for the big kids. My son got approximately 15 minutes of a 1 to 2 hour trial. This is a kid who has successfully played for Soccer Academies in the recent past under Richard Evans and David Lee, yet was given no chance because he has not grown as quickly as other kids. Even Maradonna would not have been able to show his ability in a lousy 15 minutes.

Skilful play is not being rewarded as the Coaches are under pressure for immediate results and use players that can "muscle" results. The problem is that these skilful kids loose interest, through a lack of opportunity to represent and also knowing that at many trials for representative/grade teams they are being judged as they walk onto the field, not by what they can do. We all lose with this approach, the NSL

suffers because of the lack of quality players coming through the ranks, and ultimately the National teams, the fans loose interest in "rugby" style soccer and switch to other codes to watch.

Remember this, you cannot turn a sow's ear into a silk purse, just as you cannot turn a big and limited ability child into a Harry Kewell of the future.

I know you are not responsible for what happens at individual clubs, but as I said before coaches are under too much pressure to achieve instant results. It gives a false sense of achievement to the coaches, lets some junior players think they are better than they really are, and gives the public the wrong impression on the success of the coaches, players and club.

I would like to mention that I have just finished reading "Managing my Life" by Sir Alex Ferguson. He comments on concern shown by Mr and Mrs Beckham on the lack of growth in their young son. Sir Alex continually reassured them that their son would be six foot. We all know David Beckham's career path and some of his feats as captain of England. Sir Alex Ferguson was not interested in the boy's physical size at the time.

He was more interested that the lad could play soccer regardless of his size. Had David Beckham been born in Australia, I am sure he would not have graced a soccer field, let alone play for Manchester United and represent and captain his country because he would have been turned away from the game, under

the current situation in Australia.

His father would have said "come on son lets go and play cricket."

So please, with this major restructure of Soccer Australia, end this discriminatory and ultimately disastrous policy where size is the be all and end all of being a soccer player. There is a limit to how many times a parent can respond to their child's quest of: "Dad, what else do I have to do to get picked?" where clearly they beat the larger opponent in all aspects of the contest. Eventually I will have to say, "Let's play cricket son? At least talent will have a chance to show itself there! This attitude does not exist in Italy as Franco Zola will testify.

Let's adopt a long term perspective and allow the cream to rise to the top, take the pressure off the Local and State junior coaches and judge them on the skilful players that they produce not just their short term results.

By doing this we will give all the kids a chance and ultimately will allow talent to decide who wears the green and gold. A sound and strong house is built from the bottom with strong and firm foundations. Our next Harrys are there and waiting for a fair go!

Hoping your reforms reach the grass-roots where they are really needed.

Silvio Dalle Nogare
Kanabooka NSW

South Continue Climb

By Pano Tagaroulias

An early goal from in-form striker Michael Cucicja was enough to seal all three points for South Melbourne in a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Newcastle United.

This match was the first of a double header for United as they traveled to Sydney last Sunday and drew one-all. The match against South Melbourne was originally scheduled to be played in round 18 before being brought forward.



Unfortunately for the home side the crowds continue to fall with just 1231 spectators turning up at Energy Australia Stadium to watch United host the league leaders.

The top of the table side were lucky to secure the win as only United's poor finishing kept South Melbourne in the game. Despite dominating for long periods of the match United were unable to break down a strong South Melbourne defence which has conceded just ten goals in fourteen matches.

United coach Ian Crook made four changes for this match with John Perosh, Josh Mitchell and Damien Brown all struggling with injury while Ryan Griffiths was dropped to the bench.

Tom Willis returned to the side, after international duty with the young Socceroos, along with Scott Thomas, Greg Owens and Peter McPherson.

Meanwhile South Melbourne boss Stuart Munro kept faith in the starting eleven who impressively defeated title challengers Parramatta Power last week.

The away side got off to the best possible start when a swift counter-attacking move led to the only goal of the game on 7 minutes.

Michael Panopoulos's through ball picked out the run of Scott Tunbridge on the left who drove a low cross into the box.

The defender on the near post appeared to leave the ball for his keeper to collect but instead gifted the ball to Michael Cucicja. The South Melbourne striker had no problem netting his ninth goal of the season from six yards to give his side an early 1-0 lead.

United had the perfect opportunity to level the scores just four minutes later when Esala Masi wasted the chance to put his name on the scoresheet.

Scott Thomas's free kick from the left found the Fijian international unmarked on the far post who glanced his header wide of the right post.

In the 32nd minute United coach Ian Crook was dealt a massive blow when captain Robbie Middleby was forced out of the game with yet another injury.

Middleby will be sidelined for an extended period which adds to Crook's growing injury list.

Middleby was replaced

by Ryan Griffiths and the young striker had an immediate impact on the game as he forced the keeper into a good save with his first touch. Mitchell Johnson's cross picked out Griffiths whose looping header was tipped over the bar by South Melbourne custodian Eugene Galekovic.

United continued to pile the pressure onto South Melbourne in the second half with the Novocastrians spurning a number of opportunities to get back on level terms. On 57 minutes a poor defensive clearance saw the ball run free to Masi on the edge of the area. The powerful striker struck the ball first time towards the bottom right corner of the goal only to see Galekovic pull off a great save to deny the home side a deserved equaliser.

The best chance of the half came on 61 minutes when Greg Owens should have put United back on level terms. Ryan Griffiths burst through the South Melbourne defence before cutting the ball back to an

United coach Ian Crook pointed out that his side's finishing cost them on the night saying, "Goals win games."

Newcastle will certainly have to improve their finishing with the

Novocastrians scoring only four goals in the last six games.

However, Crook was reasonably pleased with the performance adding, "I thought our passing, our movement was good."

"At the end of the day we got beat," summed up Crook.

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Victorian Chronicles

By Brendan Davis

GOOD KNIGHT

The mighty Melbourne Knights 50th anniversary celebrations have soured with the board deciding they won't be applying to participate in the revamped National League.

Sadly this great club will return to the Victorian Premier League while trying to act as a feeder club to a new Victorian entrant into the ASA. They hope the Knights Sommers Street home will be used by a new club as a training and administrative venue although it's unlikely the Knights could afford to fund the capital costs including adequate gymnasium, video facilities, players rooms and offices with adequate technology.

Steve Horvat, who was heading up the committee of review has in turn supported a proposal developed by a little known Melbourne Investment Bank which is trying to raise \$400,000 to \$500,000 to fund a bid for a new license in the national league. We don't know yet how they plan to raise the \$5m - \$10m capital required to fund the club through its initial seasons.

Other than Steve Horvat the no details are available on this supposed "new group" which would be supported by the Melbourne Knights.

Across town, the future of South Melbourne has strengthened.

Several millionaire business men are being linked with the Lakeside Club

While the team was in Sydney for the Spirit game, Vice President Leo Athanakis together with CEO Mark Patterson and President Mitakas were presenting a model for South's future to the membership. A similar presentation was made to the coterie and major sponsors the week prior.

South are likely to pursue a joint venture between the existing club and private capital

to ensure the capital base is adequately secured in the new competition.

The latest business executive linked with South is successful Adelaide based property tycoon, Con Makris. Like Frank Lowy, Makris has accumulated his millions developing and managing shopping centres -



acquiring a major stake in South would provide him with quite a springboard in the new ASA.

South President, Peter Mitakas said he is in discussions with various consortiums and individuals; stand by for the developments in what will be a most interesting saga.

FULL HOUSE AT BOB JANE

What a great night it was when South hosted Parramatta.

When the draw was first released few expected that game to provide such a drawcard, especially as South hosted arch rival Sydney Olympic only days earlier.

But it was a full house, more than 10,000 fans on a beautiful Melbourne Sunday night - and they witnessed a first class match which had all the thrills and spills of a top class fixture.

Spotted in the stand were NSL General Manager Stephan Kamaz, VSF President Manny Galanos and a swag of business people including representatives from

South's newest sponsor, Collex. South now have the Collex hippo prominently displayed on their shorts.

If Frank Lowy wants to see what the new ASA should look like he need only have been at South on Sunday night.

GREEN GULLY

On Wednesday night Green Gully started their pre season preparation with a satisfactory friendly at Bob Jane against South Melbourne.



Billy 'the kid' Damianos is currently on trial with South Melbourne.

For the record the result was a 4-0 win to South but Green Gully would be very happy with their performance.

South had three "numberless" trialists in the team, a couple of whom were quite impressive.

And in the muddle Bill Damianos who is still in dispute with his Greek Club played nicely. If anything can be arranged, he would be quite an addition to an already potent mid

field

The Antics Of Power's Numero Uno

Sadly Parramatta coach Nick Theodorakopoulos let down his club and the NSL on Sunday night at Bob Jane.

He started off parading up and down the sideline through the match, refusing to remain within his technical area, was constantly abusing the referee, the linesman and the fourth official, then incited the capacity crowd in the stand behind him.

Then with the game well over, his performance at the media conference was nothing short of shameful.

This was certainly the largest media conference hosted by any NSL Club, there were about 30 journalists and at least two TV stations packing out the media room at Bob Jane.

With the cameras running, Nick Theo not only failed to promote the code but was an embarrassment to his club.

He was asked many sensible questions by the media scrum, he didn't once look up (staring at the desk through the conference), he was playing with the media who - the same media men we are often critical of for failing to promote soccer and the NSL.

When asked about various aspects of the match he either failed to answer questions or provided stupid answers, such as:

Q: Where did you loose the game

A: On the scoreboard

His answer to several questions was the obvious line "we lost the game".

Arriving home I watched the Channel 10 news - they showed extracts of the press conference showing the Power coach's childish conduct.

While Nick Theo may consider himself to be the Alex Ferguson of Australian Football his behaviour more and more likely resembles that of Graham Souness; hardly a label he would welcome.

Nick Theo should watch the tape of Stuart Munro's media conference after the Perth Glory game (in Perth), where referee Simon Micallef awarded Glory an erroneous penalty than failed to award a clear penalty on Vaughn Coveney.

The professional and gentlemanly exhibition by Stuart Munro is in stark contrast to Nick Theo's performance.



And Nick, few would dare to suggest the result on the park was anything other than justified. South outplayed Power, South earned the victory which would have been greater if their finishing were better.

Australian soccer needs media profile, it needs role models and it needs managers capable of taking advantage of the profile opportunities provided by the media conference which Nick turned into a circus.

PREMIERSHIP BIZARRO

It's Nige and Derek here from BananaTV's Premiership Bizarro. Each week we give you the news and our views from around the grounds of the English Premier League.

This week we are well cheeched off with all the transfer bollocks that is being banged around from all the major pundits around the UK.

The only shred of truth is Red Roman Rovbles 40 million squid bid. He realised 5 minutes later that 40 mil wasn't going to cut the mustard, then upped an already ridiculous bid to 50 mil to harness Terry Henry.

Needless to say, the clueless Arse turned the offer down which would have financed their stadium and given them a clean ledger to go and look for another Terry Henry and let him play the bit parts that every other player is playing at Chelski. What the Arse is forgetting is that everyone has their price.

So, enough of the transfer bollocks and onto the serious news .. the War of the Mascots? Even though it is a little bit outside the Premier League, this latest piece of argy bargy has got us intrigued. Chaddy the Owl, otherwise known as the Oldham Athletic mascot has been the centre of mascot aggro against a rival mascot in the last week.

Chaddy is not the lovable owl that appears before the game to get the crowd behind their team. Chaddy appears to have more slightly more aggressive tendencies than most owls, particularly towards cuddly bears.

Chaddy suddenly went berko and hoofed into the Blackpool mascot, Bloomfield Bear at this last Saturday's FA Cup clash, by knocking him to the ground, pulling off his boots and slinging them into the crowd. This incident left older fans rolling around in the

isles but the younger fans were drastically traumatised, seeing their hero getting a good kicking.

The Blackpool press officer was quoted, "I was in the press box and they were play-fighting, when Chaddy waded in and seemed to be kicking 10 bells out of Bloomfield Bear."

However, Chaddy is claiming to be the innocent party, saying Bloomfield Bear was trying to break his beak. He said: "Ninety per cent of mascots are top guys, but some of them think if they can floor Chaddy the Owl they can be in the newspapers."

The geezer that wears the outfit has definitely got right into the character role play with this one as he seems to believe he is Chaddy the Owl. After winning back-to-back Mascot Grand Nationals he has assumed celebrity status and is suffering a bit of a split personality.

The technical operator of Chaddy, aka the geezer with the silly costume on, has not been named and we are assuming that he has changed his name to Chad Owl.

There has been a series of Mascot bust-ups in the past, which can only be described as mascot rage. It looks like it is not only footballers that suffer from white line fever (at least they cross the white line), mascots get caught up in the heady atmosphere themselves.

Take the incident of Cyril the Swan and Millwall's Zamba the Lion. Cyril has got himself quite a reputation as a mascot basher. Anyone that can go to the Millwall's Den and chin their mascot has got to be a force to be reckoned with.

Cyril received a thousand squid fine for nipping off Zamba's head and drop kicking it into the Millwall crowd. While Wolves mascot, Wolfie, has waded into all the 3 pigs of

Bristol City and chinned the lot. 3 on 1, and banging the crapper out of them all, is a mascot to be reckoned with.

Derek and myself think there is a few quid in Celebrity Mascot Knockout.

These antics should be encouraged when the football gets so bad that the crowd need some kind of gratification for lashing out at least 50 quid of their hard earned.

More aggro reported this week, this time between manager and player. Burnley gaffer Stan Ternent has been known to have a short fuse. Last week he got into a discussion with ex ManU defender, David May

Stan however had the final word when he caught May by total surprise with a vicious head-butt. Good one Stan, there goes your central defender for the weekend. This incident has coincided with the launch of his autobiography, Stan the Man.

In this collection of violence and mayhem, Stan recollects his finer moments such as the time he caught Sheffield United No2, Phil Blackhall, listening at the dressing room door for the tactics. Not that Stan deviates from his one tactic. Except on this occasion, he roughed up Blackhall good and proper before delivering the devastating noggin to the nose.

In another incident, Stan recollects how he was driving his car with a serious hammy injury and got carved up. He pulled up to the traffic lights, and because of his incapacity to deliver his trademark blow, slammed one of his crutches into the window of the now terrified driver.

Stan's comment to this was "I didn't need to get out of the car, as the look of fear on the other driver's face was enough gratification."

To us it looks like the David May incident was just a publicity stunt for the sake of his

memoirs of a nutter.

There ends the week of Bizarro, this time, outside the Premiership. You can tune your computer in each week to www.bananatv.com for all the latest bollocks.

lock.

- See you here next time!

Nige & Derek
Premiership Bizarro

Danze eyes Glory spot

By Brett Klučnik
www.football.com

Anthony Danze has set his sights on a regular place in the Perth Glory team.

The talented midfielder returned to Glory training this week after impressive performances for the Australian Under 20 side at the recent World Youth Championship.

"I'm confident I can play at national league level, it's just about getting an opportunity," Danze told the West Australian newspaper.

"We were playing against the best players in the world at under-20 level, so it was a pretty good standard. It's not a huge difference to playing here. Sometimes you have doubts but being over there and holding my own against good opposition, I probably reassured myself that I can do it."

Danze, whose Glory contract expires at the end of the current season, scored twice in Australia's magnificent 3-2 win over tournament favourite Brazil to secure their safe passage into the second round. The win came after the Young

Socceroos were held to a draw by Czech Republic and victory over Canada. But, after scaling such heights, Australia were eliminated in the second phase by host nation the United Arab Emirates.

"We will be remembered for beating Brazil but it was a big opportunity wasted," Danze said. "It was disappointing in the end. At times we played really good football."

Having impressed as a 16-year old while playing for E.C.U. Joondalup, Danze knocked back an offer from English club Southampton in preference for joining Glory in September 2000.

The following year he took up a scholarship at the Australian Institute of Sport which in turn lead to his inclusion in the Joeys squad which competed at the Under-17 World Championship in Trinidad and Tobago.

It wasn't until February of this year that Danze finally made his National Soccer League debut, the midfielder going on to make seven appearances in total for Glory over the latter stages of their successive 2002/03 season.

Green and Gold Army Series

Green & Gold Army

http://ggarmy.com

SOCER NOOS

Queenslanders chance to see the Olyroos

All those in Brisbane have a chance to see the Olyroos in action before they head to Sydney for the Olympic Qualifying Series. The game is on Saturday January 11 at football's home at Perry Park - kick off 7pm GET TO THE GAME

Olyroos Olympic Qualifiers and Friendlies – JUST 3 WEEKS AWAY



The Olyroos will be in action right across the country in January including a friendly against Republic of Korea and the all-important Olympic Qualifiers. Make sure you make an effort to get out and see the not too distant future stars of Aussie soccer. Remember 9 out of 11 Socceroos were involved with our last batch of Olyroos. THE FUTURE STARTS HERE.

January 7 2004	Friendly vs Korea - Members Equity Stadium, Perth
January 10 2004	Friendly vs Brisbane Strikers - Perry Park, Brisbane
OFC Olympic Qualifiers	
January 14 2004	(7.30pm) vs Samoa - Sydney
January 16 2004	(5pm) vs Papua New Guinea - Sydney
January 20 2004	(7.30pm) vs Solomon Islands - Sydney
January 22 2004	(7.30pm) vs L.C. - Sydney**
January 26 2004	Playoff 1st Leg - Sydney**
January 30 2004	Playoff 2nd Leg - Auckland, New Zealand**

**Assuming that Australia and NZ win their groups

Marconi Stadium has been confirmed as the venue for the group games, while the final will be at Parramatta Stadium. All tickets are general admission, simply buy at the gate and head behind the goals to join up with your GGArmy comrades. A group from Melbourne will be heading up for the last call to see the final in Australia Day. If you are in Sydney, expecially in Wollongong, Central Coast or Newcastle make your way over to Marconi to see the games.

Itinerary for people wanting to attend all games and/or the final will be arranged shortly. Should be a fun week or two of Aussie soccer across the continent so stay tuned.

T-SHIRTS FOR SYDNEY QUALIFIERS

GREEN & GOLD
ARMY

The first of many GGArmy merchandise products will be available ahead of the Qualifiers in Sydney. Our inaugural run of t-shirts will be will be available in mid January for \$20, so jump on to ggarmy.com to pre-order and pick it up at the game, or arrange postage by contacting admin@ggarmy.com

Socceroos to play Venezuela

The Venezuelan Football Association has confirmed that the Socceroos will play them in Caracas on February 18, 2004.

The match is to take place at the Olympic Stadium in Caracas. As much as the GGArmy would love to send a contingent over there are several warnings on stability in the country. On top of this Qantas quote fares of \$2500 plus to get there. That said, if there is anyone interested in travelling for the game contact admin@ggarmy.com and, numbers permitting, we will endeavour to organise a travel package.

Say Cheese! It's the BIGGER and improved GGArmy Photo Gallery



We have had some good additions to our Photo Gallery recently. As always if you have any photos of you in action at any Australian fixture from the Matildas through to the Socceroos send them to madmack@ggarmy.com and we will post them. don't be shy!

The Green and Gold Army – Australia's national soccer supporters group

Join free today by visiting ggarmy.com

Soccer's 12 days of Christmas

Let us start off by saying how inappropriate this article is. Talking of Christmas when referring to the world game.

A game that fascinates people of all of earth's colours, creeds and religions more than any other. This weeks piece will be hitting you as you head outside with a cup of Hot Chocolate while dusting the snow off your home delivered copy of ABSW, frost freezing your finger tips (oops wrong hemisphere) you are more than likely firing up the BBQ and cracking open the esky. This weeks ramblings come to me as an epiphany of the way a humble Australian soccer fan could be pampered by their true love – soccer over the 12 days of Christmas.

1. On the first day of Christmas my true love will give to me the Socceroos logo. The old Soccer Australia rest its sole, still hits us every time we deal with the shiny new ASA. The fledgling body has simply taken to the former moniker and added a splash here and a splash there and wala! Same old broken image. Its not a particularly bad logo, its just that given what the ASA promises to be, we should perhaps push for something that gives a nice clean break from the dark past as we move into a hopefully bright future.

2. On the second day of Christmas my true love will give to me the Socceroos live in the flesh. Not live on SBS or Channel 7 at obscure times, or worse: replayed at obscure times! Not even at Upton Park, although we do have an impressive 100% record at the venue. Sure the Socceroos will have to play the bulk of their games in Europe where the players earn their keep. But imagine a summer without a Cricket Test or a winter without the Wallabies without aye, yes? But the Socceroos not booting a ball in anger for over 2 years in Australia is what John Q Aussie soccer fan has had to contend with. Note, bow around Harry Kewell and Paul Okon is not essential.

3. On the third day of Christmas, given that we got our wish on Day 2, we will need something to wear. How about the grand spanking new Aduas Socceroos top for a start? There have been whispers about town that the new kit is sensational – gold for home and the standard navy for away – perfect stocking stuffer for any fan (soon to be available through ggarmy.com, shameless plug-head to be done!)

4. On the fourth day of Christmas we want the Crawford Report ratified. This doesn't mean state federations blindly handing over their right to exist, however it does require everyone in the sport doing what's best for the game. Dragging of feet by a handfuls while literally hundreds of others tow the line and look forward is not what any little bunny wants this festive season. Crawford came with a \$15 million lifeline from the government, lets not let the cheque get lost in the mail.

5. On the fifth day of Christmas we want a new national soccer league ASAP. Whether it be 8 teams, 12 teams or 32, just bring it on. Show me it on TV, let me listen to it on the radio. Let me read about in the paper more than twice a week and let me talk about it with my mates without drawing blank expressions before being asked when the Wizard Cup starts.

6. On the sixth day of Christmas my true love will give to me Soccercoos players with Australian accents. Its not their fault and we assume they aren't just putting it on, but it's just plain un-Australian the way several of our prominent Socceroos sound. Messrs Okon and Viduka are dismissed of all charges. They may have slight so called ethnic twangs, but there is no doubt these lads grew up in suburban Oz. One thing any culture has especially one like ours that is born of literally hundreds of imported cultures is its own

unique accent. We know guys like Moore and Kewell have been abroad since they were in short pants, but lets give them some Aussie lessons. Perhaps Harry should be subjected to nightly doses of Neighbours and Home and Away followed by some Blue Heelers and Water Rats – hold the phone, how about some Kath and Kim? Firing this perhaps some one on one coaching with none other than Steve Irwin would get that tongue twisting back the way it was meant to, even Christian Vieri sounds more dinay, die then H does.

7. On the seventh day of Christmas despite it being condemned in its current format, more Australians would be flocking to NSL grounds around the country. There is poor and then there is pathetic, and the crowds around the league this year outside of Perth, Adelaide and South Melbourne have been that. Better-supported state league clubs would be drawing healthier crowds than many in the NSL. The Queensland Lions would be thanking the man whose birthday we're celebrating this week that they avoided playing in the league this season. Even if your club wont be in the revamped league next year it will still be around in some form (scratch Parramatta from this list) as long as it gets your support. So, put down the

Christmas turkey and jump in the car and head down to your local venue

8. On the eighth day of Christmas my true love gave to me a national football program with a top class technical director and support staff. A better national set up: from youth to the Socceroos, which would give us teams that are certs to be in the second round action at each tournament and wont fall to obscure teams like the United Arab Emirates. The program will be funded properly so those in charge of these teams can prepare their team in the best possible way, allowing us to achieve our goals and expertly examine the real worth of the guys paid to manage these teams.

9. On the 9th day the Oceania Football Confederation gets its house in order or Australia ships out. The problems in the OFC have no doubt been a major plank in the derailing of a meaningful path for it to Germany. The sooner we wake up to the fact that we have vastly different aims than 95% of our confederation, the sooner we might get somewhere. We want World Cups, most of our neighbours want uniforms for their players and nets for their goals. Blatter says quitting Oceania would be a mistake, but following good old Sepp's advice has got us on a

flight back to a continent steeped in two things: impossible to beat soccer and civil unrest. More on Mr Blatter on the 11th day.

10. On the 10th day of Christmas my true love gave to me what gets the powers that be in Asia to stop point blank lying to us. If we hear one more up rating AFC official was lyrical about what will happen at the NEXT World Cup Qualification we scream. It's looking more and more like this FIFA thing's small on football big on politics! Gee what a revelation. I've just turned there. On this day we will get people speaking the truth, much like Jim Carey in *Liar Liar*. Then we might actually get some

where. 11. Continuing on the previous days theme, on the 11th day the real Sepp Blatter will please stand up. You know the guy, he comes to Australia and smiles a lot, blows smoke up prominent medias rear while receiving much the same treatment from them, all before hopping a plane and doing the exact opposite of what he told us he would. If Sepp is just a conniving politician who charms us but really wants us to drown under the rising water levels in the South Pacific then good – please just be straight with us and we pack our ball and head to Canberra where life is much less two-faced.

Whether you are celebrating Christmas, Chanukah, Festivus (with the rest of us) or just the end of another long year – Have a great Holiday Season, I'll see you at the soccer.



NO WOLFING AROUND FOR VAN BLERK



A hungry new Wolf at Wollongong – Jason Van Blerk.

By Luke Doherty

Former Socceroo Jason Van Blerk has spent the last 12 years spilling his sweat and blood on some of the finest paddocks in Europe but now he is back home and is looking to find a new lease of life under John Turner at Wollongong.

The last 12 years have been a routine of training, travelling and sleeping for Van Blerk and his hectic schedule continued on his arrival back in Australia last Wednesday.

He had just gotten off the plane at Sydney's mascot airport and his phone was already ringing for interview requests.

"Today's been a bit surreal I just got off the plane this morning and now I'm in Wollongong," Van Blerk said.

To secure a former Socceroo and a seasoned European veteran on a shoe string operating budget was man management at its best.

Turner said that he kept Van Blerk's signing quite so that other clubs wouldn't come in and out bid him.

Such is the respect that Van Blerk commands.

His long list of former clubs doesn't signal a string

of failures but rather an impressive resume of first team appearances in European leagues.

In 12 years Van Blerk played for Saint Truiden VV in Belgium, The Go Ahead Eagles in Holland before moving to England where he sat in the backlines of the likes of Manchester City, Millwall and West Brom.

But travelling and being away from home was taking its toll and the former West Bromwich Albion big man said that although that it was time to come home one way or another, Wolves were the

only club he would consider

"I was speaking to him [John Turner] over a period of three weeks - chatting about twice a week."

"I wasn't going to jump into things but it was just a good time."

"Wolves were more interested in me. They were more enthusiastic. They are a family club and are competitive and they are the two things that I have always based my game on."

"I was never going to ask the Earth. It was just a personal feeling really."

The 35 year old has the type of experience that Wolves need

The end of last season saw a mass exodus from the NSW south coast club and Turner was forced to place his faith in young and inexperienced players. With their recent run of good form the gamble looks like it is paying off, as every club now has one eye constantly fixed on what Wolves are doing.

Van Blerk will provide the old head. While he is still a lamkin from Bankstown in Sydney he will have to play the father figure in the Wolves side.

The player who says this is good but it's much easier to do it this way.

"I didn't know what intensity the NSL would be at" Van Blerk said.

"If they've got physio's then I'll be right."

But Van Blerk said that the lifestyle of a European footballer isn't as glamorous as everyone thinks.

"I don't think people understand how tough it is, the week in and week out training aspect of it."

"I've spent Christmas's in hotel rooms. You usually have to train Christmas morning because you play Boxing Day."

When Van Blerk left A.P.I.A. Leichhardt in 1991, the exodus of players to European leagues wasn't an issue like today and he said

that it was like an irresistible shining beacon for young players.

"I always was intrigued with Europe so I thought why not?"

"If I could have just played one game I would have been happy."

"I would have come back if I wasn't happy."

"If I persevere with something I usually get it. I'm the type of person who is very stubborn till I do what I wanted to achieve."

Van Blerk said that he thinks that he still has a little bit more to give to the game in Australia beyond this year. He is particularly pleased that for once his young nieces and nephews will be able to see him play.

"I'm quite fit for 25," Van Blerk joked, "I'll have to see how it goes and see how I feel."

Van Blerk made his debut for the Wolves in their one-nil away victory against Sydney United.

CHANGE IS THE ONLY WAY

Comment by Luke Doherty

With great change – comes great sacrifice. That's the view that a lot of current NSL clubs will have to take if soccer in Australia is to go forward.

The grim reality for Sydney's five soccer clubs is that two will have to go under the new plan put forward by the Australian Soccer Association.

Even that doesn't guarantee the other three clubs a right of passage as they still have to come up with the necessary funding to compete in the new league.

Chemists should take stock of their Panadol because the headache's this will cause for chairmen of NSL clubs will be enormous.

The stomach's of fans of Sydney clubs would have been churning with the release of the ASA's report on December 1, which proposed the re-structuring of the league to include only 10 teams.

And he was influential in Australia hosting the most successful Rugby World Cup in history – netting a \$45 million profit in the process.

Meanwhile, former players' union supremo Brendan Schwab has been linked with a possible role at ASA

"I'm no longer the public face of the PFA, I've taken on a new role, so I don't want to make any public comments on soccer," Schwab told the *Herald Sun* in Tuesday.

Schwab is currently employed as CEO of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance.

knockout cup involving National league and State and Territory Federation clubs be established as soon as is commercially feasible."

This would give the clubs that were 'relegated' to State Leagues a chance to still play against the new league sides, whoever they may be.

While this may not be a great source of comfort it could prove a valuable source of income for these clubs.

The report also puts forward the idea of an International club competition whereby a Champions league type competition involving Asian clubs is something that may be explored.

Imagine the windfall from these types of competitions. Last year the idea would have seemed so far off reality that if you mentioned it down at the pub you would have been laughed at.

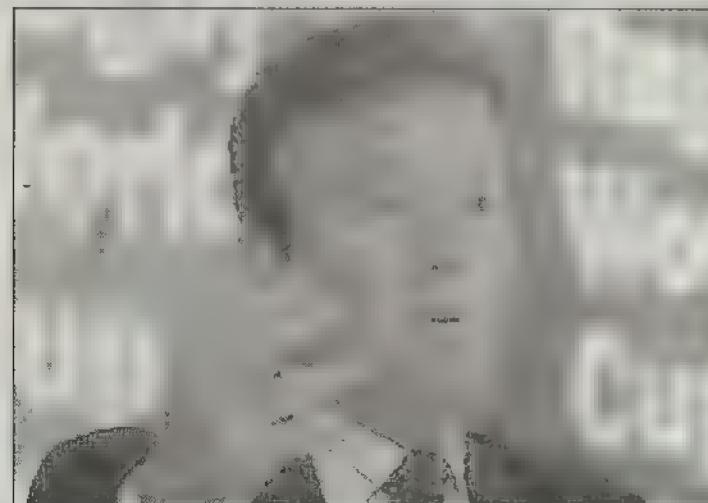
But now the possibility of tapping into the lucrative Asian market seems like a distinct possibility.

With the right marketing under advertising guru John Singleton, the new league has the possibility to dominate the summer sporting calendar. Ticket sales for cricket test matches are at an all time low because everyone knows that whoever the Aussie XI play they are going to win.

The money used to buy a ticket to a test match in Sydney would most probably buy a family pass to a game to the new league.

If Singleton and his team can show the Australian public that the NSL is a thing of the past and for once Australian soccer has tied up its shoe laces that it has been tripping over for so long then the game will be a success.

O'Neill For ASA?



ARU boss John O'Neill could get involved with the new ASA according to Melbourne reports.

Australian Soccer Association (ASA) Chairman Frank Lowy believes Australian Rugby Union (ARU) chief John O'Neill is the right man to lead the domestic game out of the doldrums, according to a report in a Melbourne newspaper.

Frank has wanted John from the

start," a source close to Lowy told the *Herald Sun*. "Whether he wants him to front the league or to become the CEO of the whole (Australian Soccer) Association is something only Frank can tell you."

However, Lowy's wish could be thwarted by O'Neill, who earlier this

start," a source close to Lowy told the *Herald Sun*. "Whether he wants him to front the league or to become the CEO of the whole (Australian Soccer) Association is something only Frank can tell you."

Schwab is currently employed as CEO of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance.

SET-BACK FOR YOUNG ROOS

The Australian Soccer Association (ASA) confirmed that the previously scheduled preparatory matches for the Under-23 national team have been altered at the request of the visiting Korea Republic Under-23 team.

The January match schedule for the national Under-23 team will still see the team play Korea in Perth on 7 January, however the scheduled match against Korea in Sydney on 4 January has been cancelled.

The Australia Under-23 team will now wrap up its preparation for the 2004 OFC Men's Olympic qualifying tournament with a match against Brisbane Strikers in Brisbane on 10 January 2004.

ASA acknowledges the support of the Brisbane Strikers football club and their Chairman Clem Jones for accepting ASA's request to host this important final preparation match.

The cancellation of the match against Korea in Sydney on 4 January was agreed by ASA following a request from the Korean FA for an altered match schedule, citing attendance to participate at an international tournament in January in Qatar as the reason for the late request.

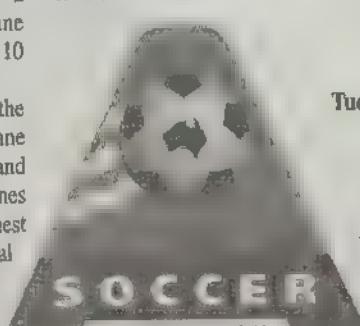
The Australia Under-23 side, led by senior national team coach Frank Farina will be aiming to secure an historic first OFC direct qualification spot for the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

The 2004 OFC Men's Olympic qualifying tournament (Group A) will be held at Marconi Stadium in Sydney between 14 - 22 January 2004.

Group A will consist of Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands while Group B, to be held in Auckland will feature New Zealand, Cook Islands, American Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

The 2 group winners will then meet in a 'home and away' play-off on 26 January (home venue Group A winner*) and 30 January (home venue Group B winner) to determine who will represent Oceania at the 2004 Olympic Games.

*Should Australia qualify as the Group A winner, the first play-off leg will be held at Parramatta Stadium on 26 January - an 'Australia Day' bonanza.



COMPLETE JANUARY MATCH SCHEDULE:

Wednesday 7 January 2004

Australia Under-23 v Korea Republic Under-23
Members Equity Stadium, Perth
Kick-off: 7.30pm

Saturday 10 January 2004

Australia Under-23 v Brisbane Strikers
Perry Park, Brisbane
Kick-off: 7.00pm

Wednesday 14 January 2004

2004 OFC Men's Olympic Qualifying Tournament Group A (Marconi Stadium - Sydney, Australia)

1. Australia
2. Samoa
3. Papua New Guinea
4. Solomon Islands
5. Fiji

Wednesday, 14 January 2004

Marconi Stadium, Sydney
Round 1:
Australia v Samoa - 7.30pm

Friday, 16 January 2004

Round 2:
Australia v Papua New Guinea - 5.00pm

Sunday, 18 January 2004

Round 3:
Australia bye

Tuesday, 20 January 2004

Round 4:
Australia v Solomon Islands - 7.30pm

Thursday, 22 January 2004

Round 5:
Australia v Fiji - 7.30pm

Monday, 26 January, 2004

First Playoff:
Group A winner* v Group B winner

*Should Australia win Group A, Parramatta Stadium in Sydney will host the first leg play-off match

Friday, 30 January, 2004

Second Playoff:
Group B winner v Group A winner
Venue subject to Group B winner

SIMPLY THE BEST FOR 'ZIZOU'

Real French star, Zinedine Zidane, was named FIFA Player of the Year for the third time ahead of Arsenal's Thierry Henry and Brazilian team-mate Ronaldo.

It is the third time Zidane has won the award having also been crowned in 1998 and 2000.

FIFA quizzed the 142 national team bosses and the 31-year-old outscored his French compatriot Thierry Henry by a very

comfortable margin.

His Real Madrid team-mate Ronaldo, another three-time winner, finished third.

Real Madrid's England captain David Beckham was only seventh.

Zidane was voted best player by 35 coaches against 21 for Henry and 26 for Ronaldo.

"It doesn't matter how many times you win an award, it is always very special," said Zidane.

"And it is even more special when it is voted by the coaches. It is a major honour for me and I am very proud to have won it."

"It was certainly worth coming to Basel and it gave me a chance to hear Ronaldo say that I deserved the award, while I consider him to be a phenomenon."

"I couldn't help notice that Thierry Henry was with us for the first time. I have no worries for him, he is still young and he has a lot more time than us to win one of these."

The midfield hub of both Real and France, he combines a prodigious work-rate with an enormous talent for providing goals for his team-mates.

Former Real great Alfredo di Stefano has already acknowledged him as one of the world's greatest alongside Pele and Diego Maradona.

He won the World Player of the Year award in 1998 and 2000 when he was instrumental in France's triumphs in the 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000.

He joined Real Madrid for a world record 75 million euros (\$90m) from Juventus in 2001 and he proved his worth by scoring the winning goal in the 2002 Champions League final for Madrid to become the champions of Europe for a record ninth title.

The softly-spoken and introverted Zidane comes from an Algerian family, born in a poor district of the Mediterranean port of Marseille who, amazingly, failed to spot him as a youngster.

Instead he joined nearby Cannes as a 16-year-old in 1988 before moving to then champions Bordeaux in 1992.

Juventus bought him for \$4m in 1996 after he had inspired Bordeaux to a UEFA Cup win over the Italian giants.

Zidane won the European Super Cup, the Intercontinental Cup and two Italian Championships with Juventus but missed out on the Champions League.

He has scored 23 goals in 86 international appearances since making his debut against the Czech Republic in 1994.

But perhaps his most important were the two headers he powered past Brazil goalkeeper Claudio Taffarel in the 1998 World Cup final.

He inspired France to the 2000 European Championship but was injured for the first two matches in the 2002 World Cup and only half fit when he came back as France lost 2-0 to Denmark to bow out meekly.

He has hinted that Euro 2004 may be his last major tournament but he might be persuaded to stay on for the 2006 World Cup if France win in Portugal.

The result of the vote for FIFA World Player of the Year - based on vote of 142 national team coaches

Total pts, First place votes, Second place votes, Third place votes

1. Zinedine Zidane (FRA/Real Madrid) 264 pts (35-27-08)
2. Thierry Henry (FRA/Arsenal) 186 (21-22-15)
3. Ronaldo (BRA/Real Madrid) 176 (26-11-13)
4. Pavel Nedved (CZE/Juventus) 158 (14-25-13)
5. Roberto Carlos (BRA/Real Madrid) 105 (14-09-08)
6. Ruud Van Nistelrooy (NED/Man Utd) 86 (04-17-15)
7. David Beckham (ENG/Real Madrid) 74 (08-07-13)
8. Raul (SPA/Real Madrid) 39 (08-03-10)
9. Paolo Maldini (ITA/Milan) 37 (05-03-03)
10. Andrei Shevchenko (UKR/AC Milan) 26 (02-03-07)

Past winners

- 2003: Zinedine Zidane (FRA/Real Madrid)
- 2002: Ronaldo (BRA/Real Madrid)
- 2001: Luis Figo (POR/Real Madrid)
- 2000: Zinedine Zidane (FRA/Juventus)
- 1999: Rivaldo (BRA/Barcelona)
- 1998: Zinedine Zidane (FRA/Juventus)
- 1997: Ronaldo (BRA/Inter Milan)
- 1996: Ronaldo (BRA/Barcelona)
- 1995: George Weah (LBR/AC Milan)
- 1994: Romario (BRA/Barcelona)
- 1993: Roberto Baggio (ITA/Juventus)
- 1992: Marco van Basten (NED/AC Milan)
- 1991: Lothar Matthaeus (GER/Bayern Munich)

Standings for the world's top teams

1. Brazil 848 pts (17 matches)
2. France 827 (14)
3. Spain 798 (11)
4. Netherlands 752 (11)
5. Argentina 744 (13)

Confederation standings

- Asia: South Korea 664 pts (22nd overall)
- Africa: Cameroon 712 (14)
- CONCACAF: Mexico 740 (7)
- CONMEBOL: Brazil 848 (1)
- Oceania: Australia 498 (82)
- Europe: France 827 (2)

FIFA award winners for 2003

- Men's Player of the year: Zinedine Zidane (FRA)
- Women's Player of the year: Birgit Prinz (GER)
- Team of the year: Brazil
- Most improved team in FIFA world standings: Bahrain
- Fair Play award: Glasgow Celtic supporters
- Special FIFA president's award: Iraqi football community

ROOS ALL SET FOR VENEZUELA

The Socceroos are set to play their first match in six months against possible World Cup playoff opponent Venezuela in February.

The Australian Soccer Association (ASA) confirmed it had reached verbal agreement with Venezuelan officials for a match in Caracas on February 18.

Written contracts are yet to be exchanged, but Socceroos coach Frank Farina said the match looked certain to go ahead.

Venezuela could be the Socceroos' opponent for a place in the 2006 World Cup finals, as it currently sits in fifth spot in the South American group.

The winner of the Oceania group - likely to be Australia - will play the fifth-placed South

American team in late 2005 in a playoff to advance to the World Cup finals in Germany.

"It's a good game for us and we could be playing them in the play-off," Farina said.

"Especially in Caracas - it lets us have a look at the country, where we are going to play, what we have to adapt to."

FIFA decided earlier this month that Oceania would have to once more beat a South American team to qualify for the World Cup finals - the same path which tripped the Socceroos up in late 2001.

It will be the first match for the Socceroos since their 2-1 win over Jamaica in England in early September.

But Farina said it was unlikely they would have to wait another six

months after Venezuela until their next hit out.

"They (the ASA) have been sensational and there will be more announcements in the next few weeks that will make a lot of people happy," including me," Farina said.

"Everything is on track towards getting more matches and a good preparation leading up to the play-off."

"But this is a really good first-up game."

"Now that we know it's South America, we can start to prepare and there will be more games to come."

Farina said he was likely to name his strongest side for the match, which is being played on a FIFA-sanctioned international



Australia's new star - Marco Bresciano should spearhead a strong squad against Venezuela next year.

week in which there is no club football in Europe.

That means Liverpool's Harry Kewell and Leeds' Mark Viduka will spearhead the side if fit, while Farina hinted he may also add younger players to the squad.

National Soccer League

After Round 15

	TOTAL					
	P	W	D	L	BYE	F A
SOUTH MELBOURNE	13	9	2	3	2	31 10
PERTH GLORY	12	8	1	3	2	23 14
PARRAMATTA POWER	14	7	2	4	1	28 14
BRISBANE STRIKERS	14	6	5	3	1	18 14
SYDNEY UNITED	13	6	4	3	1	12 7
ADELAIDE UNITED	12	4	6	2	1	13 13
NEWCASTLE UTD	15	5	5	5	1	17 17
MARCONI STALLIONS	14	4	5	5	1	16 19
NORTHERN SPIRIT	14	5	1	8	1	21 22
WOLLONGONG WOLVES	13	4	3	6	1	15 22
SYDNEY OLYMPIC	14	3	5	6	1	11 20
MELBOURNE KNIGHTS	13	3	2	8	1	9 24
KINGZ	13	1	2	10	1	12 31

PTS	HOME					AWAY				
	P	W	D	L	F A	P	W	D	L	F A
29	7	6	0	1	20 6	7	3	2	2	11 4
25	2	2	0	0	4 0	10	6	1	3	19 14
24	6	4	1	1	18 4	7	3	1	3	10 10
23	7	4	3	0	12 6	7	2	2	3	6 8
22	7	3	2	2	9 6	6	3	2	1	3 1
20	6	2	3	1	7 7	5	2	2	1	7 6
20	9	4	2	3	10 7	5	1	3	2	7 10
17	8	3	2	3	7 8	6	1	3	2	9 11
16	7	3	1	3	15 11	7	2	0	5	6 11
15	7	2	2	3	9 12	6	2	1	3	6 10
14	8	1	4	3	5 10	6	2	2	2	6 10
11	6	0	2	4	3 12	7	3	0	4	6 12
7	1	0	6	7	15	6	0	2	4	5 16

PARRAMATTA POWER 1
(S Petrovski 44')

ADELAIDE UNITED 2
(R Aloisi 10', C Veart 18')

Referee: Angelo Nardi. Crowd: 1,967. Venue: Parramatta Stadium.

Teams: **PARRAMATTA POWER**: Bolton, Colosimo (Zorbas 75'), Beauchamp, Thompson, Gumprecht, Milicic, Rech, Pantelis (Dodd 55'). Petrovski (O'Grady 80'), Sobczyk, Elrich.

Subs Not Used: Vukovic (gk).

ADELAIDE UNITED: Scarsella, Alagich, Rees, Goulding, Valkanis, Aloisi, Veart, Lozanovski (Terminello 28') (Demourtzidis 89'), Thompson (Pellegrino 68'), Westervelt, Budin.

Subs Not Used: Bajic (gk) Cautions: C Veart (AU) 40', S Thompson (AU) 51', K Rees (AU) 75', A Pellegrino (AU) 89'.

WOLLONGONG WOLVES 3
(S Young 2', C Nwaogazi 81')

MARCONI STALLIONS 3
(N Carle 45', B Maloney 52', A Brosque 77')

Referee: Simon Micallef. Crowd: 2,302. Venue: WIN Stadium.

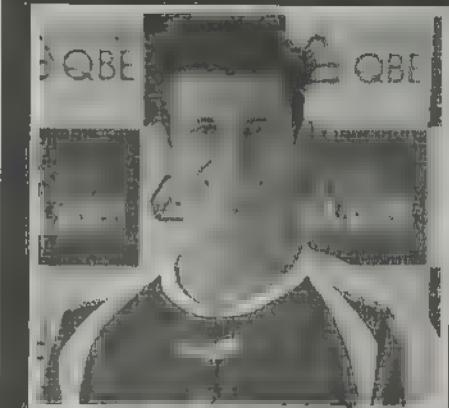
Teams: **WOLLONGONG WOLVES**: Crews, Dragas, Hughes, Hawrysiuk, Lyons, Arrarte, Young, Cummins, Van Bentum (Van Blerk 56'), Blake, Nwaogazi (Majurovski 91').

Subs Not Used: Wells, Arcaba (gk).

MARCONI STALLIONS: Turnbull, Bell, Costanzo, Casserly, Gibson, Spiteri (Harms 79'), Maloney, Brosque, Thwate, Carle, Renaud.

Subs Not Used: Webb, Brodie, Alogoski (gk). Cautions: C Gibson (MS) 28', A Brosque (MS) 29', J Spiteri (MS) 30'.

PLAYER OF THE WEEK



*Nick Mrdja
Perth Glory*

Make-shift striker Nick Mrdja last week sent a stern message to Glory coach Michael d'Avray that he too can strike after notching up a brace in Perth's two-nil away win to the always tricky Melbourne Knights.

As always, ace Glory marksman Bobby Despotovski again did not fly to Melbourne to take part in this match due to safety concerns, his place taken by Mrdja.

KINGZ 0

SYDNEY UNITED 1
(L Hall 45')

Referee: James Lewis. Crowd: 1,054. Venue: Ericsson Stadium.

Teams: **KINGZ**: Utting, Rayner, Collins, Tambouras (Scott 40'), Jackson, Ngata, Rowley, Donoso, Schijven, Harries (Campbell 75'), Beldham (Martin 46').

Subs Not Used: Nicholson (gk).

SYDNEY UNITED: Reddy, Haliti, Cunico, Vrkic, Huxley, Parisi, Babic (B Santalab 51'), Collina, Rudan, Doumanis (Langdon 84'), Filipovic (Markovic 70').

Subs Not Used: Necevski (gk).

Cautions: G Collins (FK) 18', M Donoso (FK) 70', Z Babic (SU) 40'. Red Cards: G Collins (FK) 52'.

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 0

PERTH GLORY 2
(N Mrdja 32', 74')

Referee: Mark Shield. Crowd: 3,696. Venue: Knights Stadium.

Teams: **MELBOURNE KNIGHTS**: Knezevic, R Vargas, Kovacic, Vasilevski (Natsioulas 69'), Sabljak (Marinos 59'), Razov, Leijer, A Vargas, Pelikan (Zilic 81'), Pantelidis, Trajanovski.

Subs Not Used: Tomich (gk).

PERTH GLORY: Petkovic, Bingley, Hassell, Murphy, Srhoj, Miller Danze, Mrdja (Coyne 86'), North, Byrnes, Podeljak (Caceres 75').

Subs Not Used: Matassa (gk).

Cautions: A Pelikan (MK) 47', J North (PG)

ROUND 16

Fri 2-1-04

Parramatta Power vs Newcastle Utd

Sat 3-1-04

Brisbane Strikers vs South Melbourne

Perth Glory vs Football King

Sun 4-1-04

Sydney United vs Sydney Olympic

Northern Spirit vs Marconi Stallions

Wollongong Wolves vs Melbourne Knights

Adelaide Utd - Bye

NORTHERN SPIRIT 1
(S Thomas og 62')

NEWCASTLE UNITED 1
(E Masi 34')

Referee: Eddie Lennie. Crowd: 1,935. Venue: Pittwater Park

Teams: **NORTHERN SPIRIT**: Henderson, Watts (Baveas 78'), O'Sullivan, Spencer, Tomasevic, Macallister, Richter (Kwasnik 84'), Hutchinson, Petrie, Wilkinson, Milligan.

Subs Not Used: Fisher, Page (gk).

NEWCASTLE UNITED: Willis, Deans, Thomas, Owens (Eagleton 77'), Wilson, R Griffiths, Johnson, Mitchell, Masi, McPherson, Libbesson.

Subs Not Used: Boogaard, Johnson, Kennedy (gk).

Cautions: A Wilkinson (NS) 48', M Milligan (NS) 73', W O'Sullivan (NS) 88', R Griffiths (NU) 73'.

SYDNEY OLYMPIC 1
(J Bakis 53')

BRISBANE STRIKERS 1
(D Pilic 12')

Referee: Con Diomis. Crowd: N/A. Venue: OKI Jubilee Oval

Teams: **SYDNEY OLYMPIC**: Hughes, Kohler, Juric, Schimpa (Ishida 46'), Fyfe, Cardozo (Caravella 77'), Halpin, Bakis, Augerinos (Souris 86'), Bard, Goutzoulis.

Subs Not Used: Moss (gk).

BRISBANE STRIKERS: Higgins, Dodd, Stefanutto, McCoughan, McLaren, Grierson, Fitzsimmons, Brownlie (Hilton 74'), Brain, Pilic (McKay 77'), Rose.

Subs Not Used: Heath, Kearton (gk).

Cautions: J McCoughan (BS) 40', P Grierson (BS) 59'.

LEADING GOALSCORERS

Name	Club	Total
MILCIC Ante	Parramatta	11
COHEN Vaughan	St. Melbourne	9
CO RCU Michael	South Melbourne	9
MORI Damjan	Perth Glory	8
PETRIE Stewart	Northern Spirit	7
VEART Carl	Adelaide Utd	6
PELIKAN Arthur	Melbourne Knights	5
DOUD Travis	Parramatta Power	5
PONDELJAN TOM	Perth Glory	5
MORLEY Luke	Brisbane Strikers	5

BYE - SOUTH MELBOURNE

SOCCER



Name: Javier Saviola
D.O.B: 11/12/81
Nationality: Argentinian
City of Birth: Argentina
Weight: 60kg
Height: 1.68m
Team: Barcelona





Star Profile #12

Name: Alessandro Del Piero

D.O.B: 9/11/74

Nationality: Italian

City of Birth: Conegliano - Italy

Weight: 73kg

Height: 173cm

Team: Juventus

SOC
CER

from the dressing sheds

by Mark Stavroulakis



82 And Falling For Roos

FIFA last week handed out the final positions for the year 2003 with our very own Socceroos squad falling from 78th to 82nd position in the world.

It was hard to even pick up whereabouts the Australian's were placed with some un-fancied names put in front of Frank Farina's boys.

The climb back to the top however is not a mathematical scenario - it's rather a simple solution - play more friendly hit-outs and enter more tournaments recognized by FIFA.

It's however been apparent that the Australian officials have got their acts together with a possible 11 friendly games coming up.

February 18th has already been pencilled in for the Roos clash with South American side Venezuela while matches in Europe have been pinned in for March and April.

The Oceania World Cup group phase will then start in May and June.

Apart from Australia's fall from grace, Brazil finished up trumps in the ranking department followed by France and Spain.

Top 10 Final FIFA Rankings 2003

1 - Brazil	848 points
2 - France	798 points
3 - Spain	798 points
4 - Netherlands	752 points
5 - Argentina	744 points
6 - Czech Republic	743 points
7 - Mexico	740 points
8 - England	738 points
9 - Turkey	738 points
10 - Italy	734 points

TASMANIA FOR NEW LEAGUE?

The Australian Soccer Association has received interest from a Tasmanian consortium for next year's new Premier League competition.

The group is confident of delivering 9,000 crowds in their first season.

"The people involved have respectable big businesses."

They are not your corner-shop owners," an ASA source told the Herald Sun.

"They've made their approach in writing, but they have been advised applications officially open in February."

It's been noted in the past that the Melbourne Knights have played a few friendly matches down at Tasmania as part of a promotion for the sport. It's believed that there will be a few new entries wanting in the new competition next season.

PETROVSKI TO POWER

After a week of negotiations with various Sydney clubs, it's been speculated that coveted striker Sasho Petrovski has put pen to paper with the Parramatta Power starting from January.

The former Viborg striker was being chased by Sydney Olympic and almost looked certain to sign for the Blues, but a last minute bid by the Power lured the former Wolves star to Parramatta Stadium - or so they say!

The Power have this year splurged on a record 10 new players this season.



Power star: Sasho Petrovski.

Petrovski looks set to replace the injured Jockey - Johnny Bonavoglia who is currently nursing a broken ankle.

Stay Tuned for an in-depth interview on 'Sash'.

Hoddle linked with Aussie move?

Yet another rumour has circulated the soccer circles of Australia headlining that former Tottenham and England manager Glenn Hoddle has been linked with Frank Farina's job at the Australian national team. Press reports suggested Australian Soccer Association officials had sounded out Hoddle about a move Down Under. However, his agent, Dennis Roach, insists Hoddle's priority is a club posting.

Roach said, "It is true to say there has been some definite interest for Glenn but, for now, we feel it best not to make too quick a decision over his future."

"We would prefer to sit and wait and see what other opportunities arise for a coach of Glenn's stature. "And we are confident he will be in charge of a top-flight club."

However whether this is true or not remains to be seen. For so long coaches have been targeted for either a technical directors job or the senior squad but we've seen no change.

Farina will be busily preparing for the Socceroos next friendly games - 11 in total next year.

FARINA SETS IT STRAIGHT

Australia U23 coach Frank Farina has warned his players over missing next month's Oceania qualifiers.

"The ones that don't want to come out, they definitely won't be going to the Olympics if we qualify - put it that way," he told the Sydney Morning Herald. Farina has delayed naming his squad for the Olympics qualifiers until after Christmas because of club v country conflicts.

You will see a number of our stars coming down-under for the Christmas break, most of which will be involved in the U23 squad which looks set to be a great side. Many soccer pundits believe that this could be the best squad ever assembled by Farina at U23 level.

BOB JANE - A REAL HOME GROUND

South Melbourne's supporters have really made a huge impact on this year's National League by making it that much tougher to play at Bob Jane Stadium.

Pulling in one of the best crowds in the NSL, the parochial South crowd are known for being one of the loudest and most vocal supporters in the land.

One sight and sound that has been heard ever since the club's early beginnings at Middle Park has been the infamous trumpet being sounded at every home match in Melbourne.

Other NSL clubs take note - South means business this season

Zorbas Trades Ball for Pen

Parramatta Power's energetic midfielder Peter Zorbas last week donned on a different role to his familiar position at running at opposition defence.

'Zorba' has been selected as Granville Associations Under 11's coach alongside former Sydney Olympic youth player Arthur Diles.

Controlling his anger will be something Zorbas hopes to achieve during his season with his young chargers who by the sounds of things have a good chance in winning the championship in the local NSW youth league.

ABSW will keep you updated with the Zorbas and Diles coaching show!



Peter Zorbas (Left) and Arthur Diles (Right) will be Granville U11's new managers.

Perth Glory Raid Market

Perth Glory remain in negotiations over Iraqi national team skipper Muhamed Ali

photo of the week



David Williams of R.J. Williams is one of the members of the team that has been the most successful in the last few years. Williams has been a key player for the team, helping them to several titles.

The West Australian says Glory is still investigating the possibility of Ali signing for the club. But visa problems are working against the deal.

Ali trained with Glory when Iraq toured West Australia last month.

Meanwhile, the Glory have snapped up former Olympic Sharks midfielder Andy Packer.

Glory coach Mich D'Avray moved for Packer, who was a free agent, after losing winger Matt Horsley last month.

The Queenslander has been training on his own since returning from Europe after trials with several clubs, including Coventry City.

"I had chosen to stay out of the NSL since coming back from Europe and though my agent Lou Sticca had a number of offers, none of them really motivated me," Packer told tribalfootball.com.

"When Lou told me on that Mich D'Avray had enquired about me, he did not even have to ask me whether I wanted to play for Glory. He knows me well enough to say 'yes' to Mich before even asking me."

"I am very excited about playing for Glory. One of the main reasons I had refused other NSL approaches was that after being in Europe a

nd experiencing first hand what the atmosphere and intensity was like, I felt deflated being back in Australia.

"But if there is one club in Australia that can give me a buzz that is similar to Europe, then obviously that is Perth Glory.

"So I look forward to getting there for my medical and then straight into it. I have been training very hard but obviously will be down on match fitness ... I do not think that it will be too long to bring that up to speed."

Packer will be gunning for his third consecutive grand final appearance and added, "I just want to run out at the new Glory stadium and especially in front of 18,000 fans. I will give everything I have to help Glory defend their title."

Blatter blasts soccer 'slavery'

FIFA President Sepp Blatter has accused big European clubs of "neo-colonialism" in the way they recruit young players from Africa, South America and Asia.

"The big European clubs behave like neo-colonialists, who don't care about the origin and culture (of the players recruited) and who strip developing countries of their best players without any social or economic compensation," Blatter writes in today's edition of The Financial Times Deutschland.

The Swiss chief of world soccer described the "repugnant" recruitment of these young players as a modern form of slavery.

"If we're not careful, football is going to become even more of a rich man's toy," Blatter added.

OLYMPIC TO STAY

One traditional National League club has vowed that they will be in next year's reformed league.

Sydney Olympic have made their intentions quite clear that staying in Australia's elite competition is the only thing on the current board of director's minds.

Meanwhile the Parra Power group could still be a force next year with reports that the club has had talks with Lowy's new reform group - there might be light after all at Parramatta Stadium?

CHANGE OF GUARDS?

Poor Ange Postecoglou has again been hit in the headlines this week again for the same reason - will he see out his coaching career with the U17 and U20's? Rumours around the grape-vine have stated that current AIS head-coach Steve O'Connor could be Ange's replacement?

Whether this is true or not remains to be seen however Postecoglou did state his intentions of staying on as Australia's head youth coach.

Postecoglou recently came under fire from former U17's coach Les Schienflug who stated that it was time for a change.

C
M
K

NSW PREMIER LEAGUE

Lions Rampant

Central Coast United

2

Banktown City Lions

4

by Paul Goodwin

Bankstown came to the Coast ready to produce their best after a big win the previous weekend against big guns Blacktown City.

They had a very attacking formation and set about their task well, with Matt Borg and 16 year old Robert Mileski lending great support to the speedy Alex Asanovic up front.

Central Coast had also done well in their previous game at Bonnyrigg snatching a draw so were confident of holding Bankstown.

The game was an attractive one with both sides looking capable of scoring, the visitors in particular being denied by some great work from Coasties' keeper Matt Trott.

Trott was there to pluck the ball from the head of the Bankstown men as soon as they got a sight on goal. Or so it seemed.

Borg also headed just wide a couple of times, while the fast running of Robbie Gomez and Asanovic had the home defence, well marshalled by Sean Matthews, fully stretched.

Zlatko Josevski saved the day for Bankstown, however, in the 31st minute when he dived on the line to deny Marc Falzon who had got on the end of a swift Matthews, fully stretched.

Bankstown eventually struck, completely out of the blue.

It came in the 43rd minute when the Lions got numbers forward and the ball sat up nicely for Mileski. Borg had initially stumbled on the ball as he made his way into the box after gaining possession but the defence was too slow to react and Mileski saw his chance.

He drove the ball low past a bunch of defenders in the goalmouth to give his side the lead with the ball nestling in the bottom right corner of the net, as Trott dived in vain.

Bankstown must have had something to put them to sleep at the break because they were caught napping twice in a couple of minutes by the Coasties who suddenly found themselves in the lead for the first time in the 48th minute.

First, moments after the restart Nathan Bynm,

who came on for Beau Busch, made a surging run down the right and cut the ball back beautifully for defender David Brewer to arrive at the far post and head home easily.

If the first goal looked easy the second looked easier still.

Aron Binskin on the left, out deep, swung a ball over to the far post and Coasties' skipper Falzon could not believe his good fortune to have a free header and placed his effort well beyond Zarko Glavas, in the 50th minute.

They did not appear to be too concerned once coach Andy Papoulias rang the changes, bringing on Demetri Nicolaou for the more defensive minded Zarko Glavas, in the 50th minute.

Within five minutes top scorer Matt Borg had fashioned an equaliser.

Borg drilled in a low shot from 20 yards out at a tight angle that beat Trott all ends up.

Papoulias then threw on the speedy Steve Liavas for the tiring Gomez on the hour and before long Bankstown almost scored again. Alex Trpkoski latched onto a poor clearance from the Coast defence to hit a low shot that Trott got down to well to smother and the locals hung on just a little bit longer.

In the 71st young Mileski, who had a sensational game, crossed well from the left for both Borg and Asanovic who could not connect with headers as they arrived together in the goalmouth.

A few moments later the Lions regained the lead.

Steve Liavas hit a booming shot from 30 yards out that came back off the underside of the crossbar.

It fell to Mileski whose angled shot was palmed away by the keeper but only as far as Matt Borg who was able to turn it over the line for his second of the game.

Trpkoski and Mileski combined to set up Nicolaou for a fourth goal right on full time.

The ball was beautifully struck by the former Stanmore Hawks' man from about 30 yards out.

It wrapped up an emphatic win for the visitors who went to a share of the lead with Belconnen and St George after this solid result.



An aerial clash between United's Doug West (left) and Bankstown City's Zarko Glavas

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Soccer NSW Annual General Meeting was held last week at Valentine Sport Park, Glenwood, one year after two of the states largest soccer organisations agreed to unite.

See page 26

CENTRAL COAST UNITED

(D Brewer 16, M Falzon 1, J Bynm 46, N Bynm 56, A Trpkoski 43, R Mileski 43, M Borg 56, Z Glavas 71, D Nicolaou 91)

at Mingara Rec Centre, Tumbi Umbi

BANKSTOWN CITY

Zlatko Josevski, Matthew Presello (Pau Wearne 85), Richard Lukic, Saso Trajcevski, Geoff Dwyer, Zarko Glavas (Dimitri Nicolaou 50), Alex Trpkoski, Robert Gomez (Steve Liavas 62), Robert Mileski, Matt Borg, Alex Asanovic

Subs not used: RGK Con Anastasiadis and Phil Hartshorn

Coach: Andy Papoulias

Referee: Greg Leverton

Assistant Referees: Chris Attrill and Phil Archer

Fourth Official: Ernie Horvath

Yellow Cards: Central Coast: John Dennis 17, Bankstown: Geoff Dwyer 58, Robert Mileski 74

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Crescent Star Smash Canterbury

Sydney Crescent Star

2
0

Canterbury-Marrickville

by Greg Stock

Premier League surprise packets Sydney Crescent Star picked up another high profile scalp, this time condemning Canterbury to a bottom three spot with a deserved 2-0 win on Sunday night.

Despite losing goalkeeper Steve Tolios and skipper Yavus Ekinci to injury before the half-time break, Crescent Star did more than enough to put away a very dispirited Berries outfit that lacked any real cohesion.

SYDNEY CRESCENT STAR 2
(S Ujgesnovic own goal 22' C Hog De Andre 88')

CANTERBURY-MARRICKVILLE . . . 0
at Lidcombe Oval, Lidcombe

SYDNEY CRESCENT STAR: Steve Tolios (A. Akoal 43'), Michael Cindric, Evangelos Petratos, Philip Marzer, Anthony Harsthorn, George Issa, Terry Atas, Hakan Sevgin, Costello Hog De Andre 73'), Yavus Ekinci (Darel Willoughby 19'), Joe Bruni, Askin Oygu, Coach: Yasin Ozdenak

CANTERBURY-MARRICKVILLE: Bob Catlin, Sasa Ujgesnovic, Ben Price, Cormack Begley, David Cervinski, David Harding, Alan Pickern, Sam Larocca, Pat Bourke 73'), Aheas Kotsopoulos, Leigh Gunn, Rod Hutchinson 55), John Kyraopoulos, Todd MacRae 73)

Coach: Greg Woodhouse
Cautions: Bruni, Issa 39' Hartshorn (Eco), 65' Cervinski (cm), 65' Kotsopoulos (cm), 65'

Referee: Alex Spaski
Assistant Referees: Sarah Ho and Leo Romero
Suns: Harry James 61' Tony Sekulic 68
Fourth Official: Wayne Lenardon

thumb, their limited opportunities coming from set pieces and long-range efforts.

At the other end Crescent Star were able to use their speed to create some chances and while they themselves struggled to mount an sustained pressure on the spongy surface they did do enough when it counted to keep their noses in front. Defensively Michael Cindric and Askin Oygu were towers of strength and never gave the Berries forwards a moment's rest.

Their perseverance finally paying off two minutes from time when George Issa sprung the offside trap to lay in a lovely cross to the unmarked substitute Costello Hog De Andre to tuck away from the edge of the six yard box.

The most concerning moment of the match came two minutes before half-time when goalkeeper Steve Tolios and Canterbury striker Aheas Kotsopoulos clashed when running down a loose ball. Both players returning to the action after some attention from the trainer, with Tolios again crashing to turf thirty seconds later clutching his right leg. This time he was assisted from the field and



taken to hospital for precautionary x-rays to the same leg he broke earlier this year. The news also not so good for skipper Yavus Ekinci who was also replaced after 19 minutes with a torn hamstring that could keep him out for up to four weeks.

"I am very happy for the way the side played today," said coach Yasin Ozdenak. "We still have a long way to go as a team and with our fitness, so to have nine points from our first five games, it is a bonus."

After their second indifferent performance for the year, Berries coach Greg Woodhouse held his charges in the dressing rooms for ten minutes after the game to lay down the law.

"This is the second game this year that we haven't turned up to play and we need to be much more focused as a unit," said Woodhouse.

"Collectively we were terrible and the boys really need to have a good hard look at themselves."

DEFERRED GAME

Deighan Delivers

Rockdale City Suns

2

Bonnyrigg White Eagles

1

by Paul Goodwin

At the start of the week, two days prior to this deferred game against Bonnyrigg White Eagles, Rockdale City Suns and their coach Bill Pilovski parted company.

The club is looking to use Pilovski in another capacity for the rest of the season and appointed skipper and accomplished defender, Richard Plesa, to act as coach until a permanent replacement can be found. Plesa seems keen to meet the challenge.



Bonnyrigg goalkeeper Cem Akilli gently receives the ball

The move led to the side beating Bonnyrigg at Jensen Park on Wednesday, though the Suns did have to cling on at the end as the White Eagles threw on fast runners Dejan Matenica and Dalibor Drca to augment the strike force of Aaron Burgess and Manny Papageorgiou, the latter eventually making way for Drca towards the end.

Rockdale managed to hit the front half an hour into the game when a good move, involving a number of Rockdale players, led to Peter Apolevski whipping over a cross from the right which eluded Harry James, initially, but was soon hooked into the top right corner by the wily Ben Deighan who had got forward very well.

The game was quite an even affair and before they managed to score Rockdale had threatened stand-in keeper Cem Akilli's goal several times, but at the other end Bonnyrigg had done the same.

As the game wore on Bonnyrigg continued to have chances but no luck and Rockdale managed to extend their lead in the 59th with another Deighan strike.

This time the Bonnyrigg keeper



Ben Deighan celebrates the winner as Bonnyrigg White Eagles players appeal

ROCKDALE CITY SUNS 2
BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES 1
at Jensen Park, Sefton

ROCKDALE CITY SUNS: Peter Trajcevski, Nick Orlic, Richard Plesa (C), Steve Bonovski, Malcolm Bideau, Ben Deighan, Ante Masic, Peter Apolevski, Tony Sekulic, Harry James (Steve Omitrovski 86), Daniel Kukucka (Steve Karavalakis 72)

Subs not used: RGK, Daniel Farnas, Spase Nadjoski and Sait Yildiz

Acting Coach: Richard Plesa

BONNYRIGG WHITE EAGLES: Cem Akilli, Fernando Pellegrino, Taylor Deyrmo (C), Mark D'Alessandro, Richard Harrison (Alex Canak 57'), Greg Collins, Miroslav Simonicovic, Devrim Husayin, Fred Umili (Dalibor Drca 79'), Aaron Burgess, Manny Papageorgiou (Dejan Matenica 65')

Subs not used: RGK, Steve Angelov, Shane Knight

Coach: Ljubo Jancev

Referee: Srebre Delovsk

Assistant Referees: David Finlay and Leo Romero

Fourth Official: Marc Normorn

Yellow Cards: Rockdale Peter Trajcevski 75', Ben Deighan 84', Bonnyrigg Fernando Pellegrino 81'



FIRST GRADE RESULTS & TABLES

Bonnyrigg White Eagles 1	St George Saints 2
(A Burgess 6')	(D Watkins 68', G Lagoudakis 94')
Rockdale City Suns 2	Parramatta Eagles 2
(D Alilovic 65', B Deighan 93')	(N Rivera 56', B Delicata 58')
Blacktown City Demons 2	Belconnen Blue Devils 1
(L Roodenburg 13, P Unovic 54')	(I Prenzski 32')
Central Coast United 2	Bankstown City Lions 4
(D Brewer 46', M Falzon 47')	(R Mileski 43', M Borg 56/77', D Nicolaou 91')
A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers 2	Penrith Panthers 0
(N Tome 29', J Monie 63')	
Sydney Crescent Star 2	Canterbury Marrickville 0
(D Willoughby 23' pen, K Dlandray 90')	

	P	W	D	L	F	A	D	Pts
Belconnen Blue Devils	5	3	1	1	11	5	6	10
Bankstown City Lions	5	3	1	1	11	7	4	10
St George Saints	5	3	1	1	7	3	4	10
Sydney Crescent Star	5	3	0	2	8	4	4	9
Blacktown City Demons	5	2	1	2	7	5	2	7
A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	5	2	1	2	6	6	0	7
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	5	2	1	2	5	5	0	7
Parramatta Eagles	5	1	3	1	8	6	2	6
Rockdale City Suns	5	1	2	2	5	7	-2	5
Canterbury Marrickville	5	1	2	2	3	8	5	5
Central Coast United	5	1	1	3	3	10	-7	4
Penrith Panthers	5	1	0	4	2	10	-8	3

GRADE 20 RESULTS & TABLES

Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2	St George Saints 0
(D Drcia 24', A Dzidzaric 65')	
Rockdale City Suns 1	Parramatta Eagles 4
(S Dmilstski 81')	(B Boug 46', A Kabarra 65/72', M Cassiss 62')
Blacktown City Demons 0	Belconnen Blue Devils 4
	(A Williams 17', M Ibara 53/60', M Rodriguez 85')
Central Coast United 4	Bankstown City Lions 0
(D Cooper 15', C Williams 39', D Cooper 44', M Mitchell 72')	
A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers 3	Penrith Panthers 1
(R Jones 22', M Mengi 28', J P Boutros 29')	(M Noro 85')
Sydney Crescent Star 0	Canterbury Marrickville 1
	(A Markopoulos 55')

	P	W	D	L	F	A	D	Pts
Parramatta Eagles	5	4	1	0	15	2	13	13
Belconnen Blue Devils	5	3	2	0	9	2	7	11
A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	5	3	1	1	14	8	6	10
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	5	2	2	1	10	9	1	8
Blacktown City Demons	5	2	1	2	6	10	4	7
Bankstown City Lions	5	2	1	2	9	14	-5	7
Canterbury Marrickville	5	2	0	3	6	12	-6	6
Central Coast United	5	1	2	2	7	7	0	5
Sydney Crescent Star	5	1	2	2	8	9	-1	5
Penrith Panthers	5	1	1	3	9	10	-1	4
St George Saints	5	1	1	3	6	8	-2	4
Rockdale City Suns	5	1	0	4	5	13	-8	3

NEXT ROUND 6

FIRST GRADE

HOME TEAM	AWAY TEAM	DATE	KICK-OFF	GROUND
Penrith Panthers	St George Saints	Sat. 10th Jan.	7.00pm	Cook Park
St George Saints	Central Coast United	Sat. 10th Jan.	7.00pm	St George Stadium
Blacktown City Demons	Rockdale City Suns	Sat. 10th Jan.	7.00pm	Gabbie Stadium
Belconnen Blue Devils	Bankstown City Lions	Sat. 10th Jan.	7.00pm	McKellar Soccer Centre
Parramatta Eagles	A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	Sun. 11th Jan.	6.00pm	Meita Stadium
Canterbury Marrickville	Bonnyrigg White Eagles	Sun. 11th Jan.	5.00pm	Henson Park

GRADE 20

HOME TEAM	AWAY TEAM	DATE	KICK-OFF	GROUND
Penrith Panthers	Sydney Crescent Star	Sat. 10th Jan.	5.00pm	Cook Park
St George Saints	Central Coast United	Sat. 10th Jan.	5.00pm	St George Stadium
Blacktown City Demons	Rockdale City Suns	Sat. 10th Jan.	5.00pm	Gabbie Stadium
Belconnen Blue Devils	Bankstown City Lions	Sat. 10th Jan.	4.30pm	McKellar Soccer Centre
Parramatta Eagles	A.P.I.A. Leichhardt Tigers	Sun. 11th Jan.	4.00pm	Meita Stadium
Canterbury Marrickville	Bonnyrigg White Eagles	Sun. 11th Jan.	3.00pm	Henson Park

LEADING GOALSCORERS

7	Matthew Borg (BCL)
4	Daniel Macor (BBD)
3	Ilija Prenzski (BBD), Ben Deighan (RCS)
2	Bruno Beddori (SG), Hakan Sevgin (SCS), Filip Marze (SCS), Manny Papegeorgiou (BWE), Anthony Gallozz (BBD), Zlatko Arambasic (ALT), Vic Costabile (PE), Luke Roodenburg (BCD), Dimitri Nicolaou (BCD), Paul Jirovec (BCD), Aaron Burgess (BWE), Daniel Watkins (SG), Norman Tome (AL), Denis A. Iovic (RCS), Raphael Bove (SG), Josh Maguire (BCD), Marcus Phillips (BCD), David Barrett (ALT), George Issa (SCC), Yavuz Ekinci (SCS), Matthew Clowes (PE), Jamie Subat (CCU), Daniel Surridge (CCU), Jason Connolly (PP), Greg Collins (BWE), Alex Asanovic (BCL), Sam Larocca (CMO), Nathan Bym (CCU), Anthony Mitiaga (PE), Allan Picken (CMO), Jason Sciberras (PP), David Harding (CMO), Simon Catanzaro (BCD), Daniel Borg (Parramatta), David Arribalzaga (BBD), Scott Conion (BBD), David Brewer (CCU), Robert Mileski (BCL), Marc Faizon (CCU), George Lagoudakis (SG), James Kovas (SG), James Monie (AL), Daniel Willoughby (SCS), Costello De' Andre (SCS), Ben Delicata (PE), Nathan Rivera (PE)
1	

NSW PREMIER LEAGUE TIPPING COLUMN



PAUL GOODWIN
SOCCER NSW JOURNALIST

Points = 10



TARYN ROCKALL
NSW SAPPHIRES CAPTAIN

Points = 6



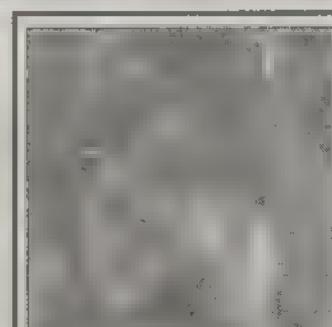
ANDY PASCHALIDIS
ELITE SPORTS TRAVEL

Points = 11



GREG STOCK
SOCCER NSW JOURNALIST

Points = 7



'PEANUTS'
THE MONKEY

Points = 9

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Blacktown knock over leaders



Blacktown City Demons

2



Belconnen Blue Devils

1

by Paul Goodwin

Blacktown City Demons managed to find form, when it mattered most, at The Gabbie on Saturday night when they were worthy 2-1 winners over early competition leaders, Belconnen Blue Devils.

From the beginning it was clear that we were in for something special as both teams worked the ball through long passing sequences, seemingly taking turns to probe in search of an opening goal. The respective goalkeepers were kept on their toes and each had to make important early saves.

For the first time this season Demons coach, Brian Brown, was able to field a full strength line-up and it clearly made all the difference in the final analysis.

The home team had a very solid look about it as they slowly-but-surely gained the upper hand in the tightest of games.

Belconnen exuded an air of quiet, but well-justified, confidence, having been unbeaten in the opening four rounds of the competition.

They, too, had their strongest possible line-up on show and they refused to take a backward step against a club that has, over the years, established an enviable record of success on their home turf.

Blacktown broke the early deadlock in the 14th minute when Josh Maguire found himself on the end of a spectacular sequence of passes which had involved some very clever movement off the ball, a

good deal of flair and a high number of accurate deliveries.

Maguire received the ball wide of the goal on the right before he played it perfectly into the path of Simon Catanzaro, who had striker Luke Roodenburg waiting alongside him and when the ball would not go in the first time Roodenburg quickly bundled it over the line.

The visitors rolled up their sleeves and increased the tempo of their play in an attempt to break down the well organised Blacktown defence but they had no success at all as the Demons continually repelled the very best their opponents had to offer.

However, the old adage, "the harder you work, the luckier you seem to be", certainly applied to the Blue Devils.

In the 33rd minute Belconnen launched an attack on the right.

At the crucial moment of that raid the linesman's flag came up to signal that a player was off-side and the Demons paused, waiting for the whistle but it never came.

The Blue Devils pressed forward in search of an equaliser with several defenders, somewhat belatedly, in hot pursuit.

The man in the apparent offside position, Daniel Macor, kept out of the action allowing Alex Castro to come steaming through the gap and then sending over a simple cross to the far post.

Ilija Prenoski was on hand in acres of space to finish the move with a fine shot

that gave Demons goalkeeping captain John Crawley absolutely no chance.

Locked at 1-1 at the break, both teams and every spectator at the ground knew that the next team to score would probably win this very tight, evenly balanced game.

After some well chosen words of advice from the respective coaches, the combatants returned to the arena and proceeded to produce some of the best football to have been played on The Gabbie for many a year.

Ten minutes into the second period Blacktown seized their chance to regain the lead when midfielder Marcus Phillips played a clever, pin-point accurate cross for Paul Urlovic and the Kiwi International's header found the mark.

While the match was far from over, the Demons had their noses in front and they were not about to drop their standards to allow their guests to take any points from the game.

The end-to-end action was a delight for both purist and the casual observer alike and it certainly provided entertainment plus for the full ninety minutes.

Disappointingly, Belconnen lost any real chance of pulling a rabbit out of the hat when their midfield playmaker Elliott Zwangobani was shown a red card midway through the second half for an off-the-ball challenge on Kain Rastall.

Try as they might, the ten-man Blue Devils found Blacktown far too well organised to break down a second time.

Afterward Blacktown coach Brian Brown was pragmatic.

"Yes, we played very well tonight. Yes, I was very happy with that form. But we have to play that well, or better, every week", he said.

"Our boys lifted and were ready to play well today."

Brown had spoken to his team before the game about commitment and playing to win and he felt that his men did just that, after explaining to them that Belconnen was one of the better teams.

He was therefore delighted with their performance in winning, even by the odd goal in three.

"I would have been pretty upset if we had not taken maximum points, even though Belconnen played very, very well.

They will trouble a lot of sides this season and I'm glad we've played them now and beaten them," he concluded.

Blue Devils' coach Chris Tansey said that his side had started slowly and that the other side appeared to have more desire.

"We lifted in the latter stages of the first half and deserved the equaliser, but when the second goal went in it lifted the home team again and that hurt us."

He felt his side had done enough to earn a draw but gave full credit to Blacktown for their greater desire to win the game.

It was certainly a good game to watch.



Blacktown City's Marcus Phillips

Brian Brown singled out Damien Foxe for his excellent first half performance and Marcus Phillips for his all round creativity, but emphasised that this was a real team effort.

It had been a game of much excitement, throughout, with shots blocked on the line by Belconnen, a Blacktown upright hit by Mike Katz in the second half and a constant stream of chances to the Devils in both halves, which can also be said for the home side which found Tony Giannasca in top form.

The two goalkeeper-captains certainly had plenty to do and they did it with distinction on this occasion.

Giannasca at one stage had to dive low to his right to save from Urlovic, whose shot might have produced an earlier goal for the Kiwi.

The win allowed Blacktown to creep closer to the main pack of clubs near the summit but it also dragged Belconnen back to the field.

Had the visitors won it could have opened a huge gap between themselves and the Demons and set them up nicely for the remainder of the season.



Blacktown's Brian Brown can breathe easier after this win over Belconnen

BLACKTOWN CITY DEMONS 2
(L. Roodenburg 13, P. Urlovic 54)

BELCONNEN BLUE DEVILS 1
(I. Prenoski 32)

at Gabbie Stadium, Seven Hills

BLACKTOWN CITY. John Crawley (C), Damien Foxe, Ben Ward (Paul Carbon 71), Dane Howlin, Patrick Gatt, Paul Urlovic, Marcus Phillips, Josh Maguire, Simon Catanzaro, Kain Rastall (Brian Vanega 88), Luke Roodenburg

Subs not used: RGK, Brodie Crane, Dominic Magri, Jahan Loke.

Coach: Brian Brown

BELCONNEN BLUE DEVILS: Anthony Giannasca (C), Lee Petrukowski, Oscar Zamora (Adrian Dowling 46), Toplica Popovich, Ilija Prenoski, Elliot Zwangobani, Daniel Macor, David Aranz, Nic Pundu (Scott Conon 77), Alex Gastro (Daniel Camara 77), Mike Katz

Subs not used: Anthony Gallozz, Jimmy Carr

Coach: Chris Tansey

Referee: Nick Asarghios

Assistant Referees: Gwyn and Gareth Askham

Fourth Official: Jim Nicolaou

Red card: Belconnen Elliott Zwangobani: 83

Yellow Cards: Blacktown: Nil, Belconnen: Nil



WOMEN'S NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE

CONGRATULATIONS NSW SAPPHIRES

CHAMPIONS 2003



1 Cassandra Kell
2 Hayley Todd
3 Emma Davison
4 Leah Blayney
5 Lisa Gilbert
6 Taryn Rockall (C)
7 Michelle Carney
8 Jo Burgess
9 Aysha Adalis
10 Kylie Ledbrook (VC)
11 Kristy Rohrer
12 Danielle Brogan
13 Catherine Canulli
14 Sally Shipard
15 Simone Graham
16 Briony Holcombe
17 Belinda Ristevski
18 Julia Bazi
19 Katie Hilder
21 Monique Jackson
Coach: Alen Stajcic
Assistant Coach: Steve Marsh



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FROM THE SIDELINES

WITH GREG STOCK



Plesa Replaces Pilovski

It is not Christmas yet and already we have our first coaching casualty of the season. Following their 1-0 loss to Penrith in round four, Rockdale City Suns and Bill Pilovski parted ways, replaced by a caretaker coach in Richard Plesa.

"We felt that our start to the season had been less than satisfactory and we sat down with Bill and made a mutual decision that a new appointment would be in the best interests of the the club," said Suns spokesman Mendo Cklamovski.

"In the interim, club captain Richard Plesa will take over for the two matches against Bonnyrigg White Eagles and Parramatta Eagles and over the Christmas break, the committee will make a decision on a suitable long-term replacement."



Healthy lifestyle on the Central Coast

Speculation on Pilovski's future had been mounting as early as week two of the Premiership after it was widely rumoured that the club was already talking to a couple of high-profile identities about a change.

Their 1-1 draw with Canterbury and losses to St. George and Penrith forced the decision. "We spoke to the players on Monday last week and told them what had happened," continued Cklamovski.

"We made it quite clear what our aspirations were for this season and wanted to make sure that there is no blame cast on any particular person or player. At the end of the day we want the club to do well on and off the park and in speaking to Bill it was a mutual decision to have him step down and a replacement appointed."

When asked for his comment Pilovski described the situation as "regrettable and disappointing," but declined to comment with a view to assessing his options. Cklamovski confirming the club was having

"ongoing discussions" with Pilovski on his continued involvement with the club.

Names such as Rale Rasic, Ilija Takac, Mile Todorovski and even John Sentas had been mentioned as possible replacements with Cklamovski refusing to be drawn on the issue. "We are not going to rush into any quick decisions," said Cklamovski.

"We have a two week break in which to speak to our preferred candidates with a view to having a new coach in place by the beginning of January."

Caretaker coach Richard Plesa has also thrown his hat into the ring and should figure highly in discussions following the Suns 2-1 win over Bonnyrigg and come from behind 2-2 draw with Parramatta Eagles. "Bill's departure was a bit of a surprise so it has been a tough week for the club," said Plesa.

"I really haven't sat and had a formal discussion with the committee yet, but if they were to approach me about a more permanent move, then I would definitely be interested."

M & M

While it has been a tough week at Rockdale there has been some bright news. After being the Best Man at his brother Joe's wedding a couple of weeks ago, midfielder Ante Monc and his wife Marijana are the proud new parents of twins.

A boy named Matthew and a girl named Mia were born in perfect health, and already they have dad well and truly wrapped around their little finger. Harry James wife Gloria has also announced that she is expecting the couple's first baby in June.

Well Done Wojtek

Congratulations to Wojtek Zarzynski, the Crescent Star second-string Goalkeeper who has been drafted into the Canadian Olympic Team.

Zarzynski has left Australia and will link up with the Under 23 squad after Christmas for a training camp which could see him selected in the Canucks 2004 Athens Olympic Team.

Tigers Move

A.P.I.A. Leichhardt could soon be losing defender Andrew Clark who left last weekend for trials in Singapore. Rockdale midfielder Denis Alilovic also departed for a hastily arranged trial in Malaysia but returned to Sydney last Friday after knocking back the offer.

Dolphins Prepared

Winter Super League outfit Manly-Warringah has wrapped up their pre-Christmas training with three matches against Northern Spirit. The results of which were two losses and a draw, with coach Phil Moss putting a number of his fringe players through their paces in a bid to secure a first grade squad.

Moss has confirmed that Gold Medal winner Robbie Portelli has signed with the Dolphins while veteran midfielder Steve Berry has also agreed to play on another season to anchor the team in the centre of the park.

New Dragons

Across town at Fraser Park, Coach of the Year Ian Gillan has signed on the dotted line for a further season, and has added a handful of handy players to his squad. As we saw last week, Jason Holmes has signed with the club, following a serious shoulder injury that threatened his career, while his former Eagles teammate Glenn Sprod has also agreed to terms. Ex-Ryde City midfielder Scott Dixon is

another new addition joining Matthew Percy as the team's four new pre-Christmas additions.

Golden Boot from Golden Gate

Former Golden Boot winner Jimmy Aschner is back in town after spending the best part of the last two seasons coaching in San Francisco. Alongside another ex-Bonnyrigg player in Chris Bradley, Aschner was coaching two women's teams in the Northern San Francisco suburb of Tiburon, before returning to Sydney last Monday. "It was a thoroughly enjoyable time over there, but I am glad to be back home," said Aschner.

"To spend time being paid for coaching the game you love was fantastic, but I decided I wanted to be home for Christmas and spend some time with family and friends." Aschner has confirmed he has spoken to a couple of Premier League clubs and intends making a decision over the Christmas break. "I have been training and playing in San Fran so I am still reasonably fit and I am ready and raring to go!"



Bankstown City Lions goalkeeper Zlatko Josevski demonstrates the 'Schmeichel star jump' technique

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SOCCER NSW



Soccer NSW

AGM

Soccer NSW President Tom A. Doumanis reported an operating surplus of \$703,355 for the financial year. This was contributed to a number of reasons, essentially the result of unification.



Mr Tom A. Doumanis

"As we reflect on our achievements over the last 12 months, we can genuinely feel a sense of enormous satisfaction, and confidence as to the future direction of Soccer NSW". Stated Mr Doumanis.

Significant strong performances were recorded in the areas of Soccer NSW marketing, Coerver Coaching, the Soccer Warehouse and Valentine Sports Park.

The president also addressed the issues of constitution reform arising from the Crawford report and added, "Soccer NSW and The Australian Soccer Association (ASA) have reached accommodation on key elements of the constitutional reform."

Among new initiatives announced include the return of a state-wide knock out competition and Association Academy programs for continued grass roots development.

The concept of introducing an Eastern Board Conference to act as an intermediary competition to the National league and State leagues was another initiative discussed.

An inquiry will also be held to review the future playing field requirements for Associations.

It was pointed out during the meeting the growth of the sport in the State can only be frustrated by the lack of playing fields.

Life Membership was granted to four people, Howard Bradley, David Goodman, Tony Raciti and Ray Tweedie in acknowledgment for their many years of contribution to the code.

Specific acknowledgment was made for the significant contribution of Vice-President Jim Forrest in balancing the traditions and cultures of two pre-unification diverse organisations and the Board of Directors for their initiatives, pragmatism and commitment.

Wyong Going Strong

The Central Coast Soccer Association as we know it today was established in 1963 and has steadily grown from 13 registered teams from 5 clubs to over 600 registered teams from just over 20 clubs.

Wyong Soccer Club was formed the following year in 1964, registering just two junior teams but has now grown to include Junior and Girls Junior teams as well as Senior Mens and Ladies sides.

In the early years, only junior soccer was played on the coast with any senior sides having to compete in Newcastle or Sydney competitions.

The year 1972 saw the commencement of the Central Coast Association competition and Wyong Soccer Club was an ever-present member in the top flight until the 2002 season when the club was relegated to Premier League Two for the first time in its history.

Wyong is arguably one of the most successful clubs on the Central Coast having been crowned League Champions 8 times, Grand Final Winners on 7 occasions and are also one of the most successful clubs in the Central Coast's Association Cup competition having won the trophy 5 times and also been runners up on another 5 occasions.

The clubs first major success came when Wyong won the 1977 Grand Final. It was followed in 1979 with the first League Championship and this was repeated the following year.

1980 also saw the Emus lift the Association Cup for the first time. In fact Wyong made the cup their own in the early 80's as they retained it in 1981 and won it again in '83 and '85.

But 1983 was arguably Wyong Soccer Club's best ever season as they created history by winning three Senior Grand

Finals in one day ie First Grade, Reserves and Under 19's. With First Grade also going on to win the Association Cup that year as mentioned before, this side was to sweep all before them !!

But the 1990's were without

doubt the best era so far for the Emus with 4 League Championships and 4 Major Premierships, three of those being the Minor and Major 'double' in '93, '94 and '99. Add to that two Grand Final runners up finishes in '95 and '97 along with four Association Cup Runners Up (all in a row '96, '97, '98 and '99 !!) and you can see why Wyong were a well respected club during that decade.

Many players from Wyong were nominated for Central Coast Association awards throughout that time with some winning their nominated position.

In the Best Defender category, Wyong had a winner 5 out of 7 years with Graham Boulter picking up the prize in '91 and '92 and Mick Carroll in '94 and '95.

Carroll was also nominated in 1993 and 1996 for the same award but unfortunately missed out on what would have been the start or end of a hat trick of wins for him.

As for Graham Boulter, he was nominated in the Best Midfielder category for the two years following his Best Defender wins but was unlucky to miss

out both times. Mark Callaghan picked up the Best Defender prize in 1997.

Other notable awards came for Norm Jackson in 1990 and Matty Garland in '93 and '94 for Coach of the Year, the

Emu's having won the

Premiership on those three occasions and Steve Powis for Midfielder of the Year in '95 and '97.

A number of Wyong players have also received the ultimate accolade of being the Central Coast's Player of the Year. They are Ian Memhet (shared) in 1977, Ross Sanders in 1978, Stuart

Town in 1985 and 1990 and Derek Caisley.

"Dekka" Caisley was in fact the first player to win the award three times, the first two in 1995 and 1996 when playing with Gosford City and his hat trick came in 1999 after his first season in Wyong colours when he shared the prize with Umina's Andrew French, the only other player to now have also won three Player of the Year awards after picking up the prize in 2000.

Who can tell what the future holds, but the present committee is determined to see the clubs top grades make as swift a return to Premier League 1 as possible and with the Central Coast being such a boom area at the moment there are hopes that the Junior ranks will swell and so keep the club in good stead in the future.

Courtesy Wyong Emus club website



A beacon for youth soccer



In 1964, Beacon Hill Youth Club began activities in early April, when several people formed a Gymnastics group. This ran and flourished for the three school terms.

The Beacon Hill Youth Club had Bernie O'Connor as its first President, Ron Oughtred as Secretary and Ben Love as Treasurer. These men were the driving forces.

Then, with the keenness of several other Gym members and those from Cricket, which began around August, the "round ball fanatics" got enough takers for 5 teams in 1965.

John Koster started in the first year and still proudly displays his "Inaugural Pennant".

The first teams "did not set the MWSA alight" but, as they always have done, do and will continue

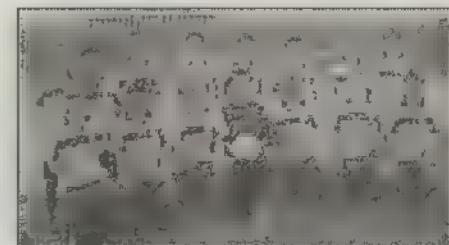
to do, they had fun. Gradually the teams grew and the people from Beacon Hill came in numbers to our family club.

So many families were moving into Beacon Hill and joining the Youth Club that many sections were running, with Gym, Cricket, Soccer, Netball and Drama being "the big guns".

Beacon Hill was a major growth area in the sixties and seventies. By 1980 the number of players was around 400. Then came a period of ups and downs through the 80's and 90's.

Today, Beacon Hill is the fastest-growing club of all eighteen in the large Manly-Warringah soccer association.

Club history courtesy of the Beacon Hill Soccer Club website and Tony Davies



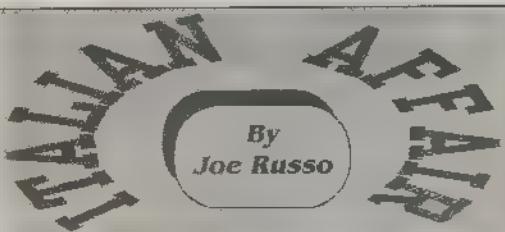
A Beacon Hill Under-16 team, photographed beside Lake Burley Griffin, while preparing for this year's Kanga Cup in Canberra.

Beacon Hill has one of the largest youth set-ups in NSW and recently featured in the Champion of Champions finals

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ITALIAN SERIE A



The Champions League draw for the final 16 teams would appear to have been kind to the Italian teams, Juventus and AC Milan.

Juventus take on Deportivo La Coruna while AC Milan face Sparta Prague but it could have been much worse. Real Madrid v Bayern Munich will be the real blockbuster in the Round of 16, the first knockout phase of the tournament.

AC Milan, the defending champions, face the conquerors of Lazio in the previous round. Sparta Prague On paper there would appear to be a vast difference between the two teams but one should never underestimate opponents.

Juventus, finalists to AC Milan last season, once again square off to Deportivo La Coruna whom they have faced several times in the last few years.

Earlier in the tournament the Spanish team went down 8-3 to Monaco of France and any signs of defensive weaknesses will be severely punished by Juventus.

Meanwhile in the UEFA Cup there are still four Italian teams, Roma, Inter, Perugia and Parma, in the Round of 32.

There will be an interesting Australian connection in the Parma v Genclerbirligi match. It will be Parma's Mark Bresciano against fellow Socceroo Josip Skoko who lines up these days in the Turkish side.

There will be another Italy v Turkey match when Roma take on Gaziantepspor.

Inter Milan face French opponents Sochaux and Zeljko Kalac's Perugia have the difficult Dutch opponents in PSV Eindhoven.

♦♦♦♦

Once again Christian Vieri, arguably on the best striker in world football, is in the news but this time he has had enough of the media speculation.

Recently some famous Serie A footballers, including Vieri, launched a marvellous anti racism calendar. It goes without saying that the cause is of course fantastic.

Vieri was able to clear the air somewhat with journalists that were present at the launch. In short, he is tired of reading innuendo about him in the papers.

Recently there have been claims that Vieri doesn't like the coach, Alberto Zaccheroni, and that he is offside with some teammates. He has labelled these claims as pathetic and ridiculous. Noticeably there has been a lack of celebration on his part after he scores goals and he has failed to start in some matches for Inter.

In the recent Bologna-Inter clash he came on as a second half replacement and even Bologna's coach, the veteran Carlo Mazzone, was asked post match by interviewers what he thought of the situation. Mazzone's reply was very cute: "In my 30 years plus coaching career, I have never been in charge of a team that could have afforded the luxury of leaving Christian Vieri on the bench."

The problem for Vieri is that the Italian media will only add fuel to the fire every time he tries to clear up the situation. One of the latest is that he is supposed to be on the move to Barcelona. There are three daily sport papers in Italy and hundreds of television soccer programmes that go to air. Add to that radio, magazine and internet coverage and one quickly gets the picture of what an obsession Italy has with 'il calcio'.

Furthermore, unlike in Australia where you would have in a newspaper say the rugby writer, the cricket writer, the tennis writer and so forth, the sports media in Italy is divided into only two categories, soccer media and other sports media.

There is a clear need to find stories and every little opportunity will be pounced on.

♦♦♦♦

AC Milan narrowly went down to Boca Juniors after a penalty shootout in the Intercontinental Cup in Yokohama recently after scores were locked at 1-1 at full time.

However, one cannot help but lament the lack of publicity for this match. Australia especially when in years gone by the old Toyota Cup final was one of the highlights of the footballing calendar. AC Milan have been regulars in this match over the last 15 or so years but they had to surrender to Boca Juniors, coached by Carlos Bianchi, famous for criticising Italian football but then again he may still be hurting from his abrupt departure as Roma coach some years ago.

We take this opportunity of wishing all ABSW readers a wonderful Christmas and a Happy and Safe New Year. Buon Natale!

♦♦♦♦

Meanwhile Sydney listeners can tune into 98.5 FM on Sunday nights at 10.00pm for all the latest soccer news.

EMPOLI 0
AS ROMA 2

Two first-half goals by captain Francesco Totti gave Serie A leaders Roma a 2-0 win at Empoli.

Totti broke the deadlock with a 23rd-minute penalty after defender Francesco Pratali tripped striker John Carew.

The Italian international doubled Roma's advantage just before half-time, lobbing Empoli keeper Luca Bucci from the edge of the area.

Empoli, second from last in the division, struggled to create chances. Their best effort -- a long-range drive by defender Manuel Belleri -- sailed over.

AC MILAN 1

UDINESE 2

AC Milan, who had not been beaten in Serie A this season, slumped to a 2-1 home defeat to inform Udinese.

The visitors arrived at the San Siro stadium on the back of three consecutive league wins and dented Milan's hopes in the second minute when striker Dino Fava fired past Brazilian keeper Dida from the edge of the area.

Udinese made it 2-0 six minutes after the interval when defender Nestor Sensini nodded Valerio Bertotto's powerful free kick past Dida.

Milan's Brazilian winger Cafu pulled one back for the home side in the 70th minute, but the visitors withstood a period of late pressure to hold on for the win and go seventh, level with Parma on 24 points.

LAZIO 2

INTER 1

A miserable day was Milan club's continued as Inter Milan missed the chance to overtake city rivals AC and Juve as they were beaten 2-1 at Lazio.

Christian Vieri gave Inter the advantage on the stroke of half-time but Bernardo Corradi levelled two minutes before half-time.

Inter lost Matias Almeyda to a red card on 68 minutes, and Lazio claimed the win eight minutes from time through Luciano Zauri.

Lazio move level in fourth with their beaten visitors on 28 points.

PARMA 1

REGGINA 2

A last-minute goal by midfielder Francesco Cozza condemned Parma to their second consecutive league defeat as they lost 2-1 at home to lowly

SERIE B

Ascoli 1 Triestina 3, Atalanta 1
Ternana 1, Cagliari 2 Genoa 0, Catania 1
Bari 0, Como 1 AlbinoLeffe 1, Napoli 2
Fiorentina 2, Palermo 0 Messina 0,
Pescara 1 Avellino 0, Piacenza 3
Verona 1, Torino 1 Livorno 1, Venezia 0
Salernitana 1, Vicenza 1 Treviso 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atalanta	20	10	10	0	26	11	40
Palermo	20	10	9	1	27	12	39
Ternana	20	10	5	5	31	22	35
Piacenza	20	9	6	5	21	16	33
Messina	20	8	8	4	27	20	32
Livorno	20	7	11	2	23	16	32
Cagliari	20	8	7	5	33	21	31
Torino	20	8	6	6	29	21	30
Catania	20	8	6	6	27	22	30
Ascoli	20	7	7	6	25	23	28
Salernitana	20	7	6	7	15	16	27
Treviso	20	6	8	6	22	22	26
Pescara	20	6	8	6	17	21	26
Fiorentina	20	5	9	6	20	25	24
Venezia	20	4	11	5	19	21	23
Triestina	20	5	8	7	28	31	23
Napoli	20	3	13	4	14	20	22
Albinoleffe	20	5	7	8	19	26	22
Vicenza	20	3	11	6	15	19	20
Genoa	20	4	8	8	18	29	20
Verona	20	3	9	8	23	29	18
Bari	20	4	6	10	22	30	18
Como	20	3	6	11	14	28	15
Avellino	20	1	7	12	17	31	10

Reggina

Striker David Di Michele put the visitors ahead in the 27th minute, when he beat the offside trap, lobbed advancing keeper Sebastian Frey and finished into an empty net.

Parma continued to create the better chances and drew level in the 85th minute when Di Michele handled in his own area and Italy Under 21 striker Alberto Gilardino fired home the penalty.

With 90 minutes gone the game seemed to be heading for a draw, but Frey's short clearance allowed Reggina midfielder Giacomo Tedesco to cross into the six-yard box where it was hooked into the net by Cozza.

LECCE 1

JUVENTUS 1

Juventus missed a golden opportunity to leapfrog Milan following their 1-1 at lowly Lecce.

Lecce striker Ernesto Chevanton was especially energetic, closing down quickly on loose passes and harrying keeper Gianluigi Buffon.

In the 24th minute Cedric Konan nodded a cross past Buffon to put the home side ahead.

With half an hour left, Juve's chances of scoring looked even slimmer when defender Mark Juliano was sent off for a second bookable offence.

But in the 86th minute David Trezeguet gathered Stephan Appiah's lofted pass over a static defence and fired home from close range to earn his team a point.

SAMPDORIA 1

MODENA 1

Sampdoria extended their unbeaten run to seven games as a second-half equaliser from Fabio Bazzani earned them a point in a hard-fought 1-1 draw at home to Modena.

Mehdi Moustapha Kamara put Modena into the lead mid-way through the first half to give the away side a good chance of ending a run of five league matches without a win.

However Modena could not add to Kamara's fourth goal of the season, and Bazzani - who is top scorer for Sampdoria so far this season - struck five minutes after the re-start to secure a point for the hosts.

The result means that eighth-placed Sampdoria stay five points ahead of Modena in the Serie A standings.

CHIEVO 1

ANCONA 0

Rock-bottom Ancona enter the winter break still looking for their first win of the season after a 1-0 defeat at Chievo.

Ancona coach Nedo Sonetti now sees his team seven points adrift of the safety zone as all the teams immediately above his picked up a point.

Federico Cossato settled a keenly-contested encounter in favour of Chievo, who remain comfortably in mid-table.

BRESCIA 2

PERUGIA 2

Perugia came within 14 minutes of their first Serie A win of the season only to be denied by Antonio Filippini's 76th-minute strike which gave Brescia a point at the Renato Curi stadium.

The hosts led twice, thanks to efforts from Massimo Margiotta and substitute Jay Bothroyd, only for Brescia to hit back through Luigi Di Biagio and Filippini.

The draw means Perugia have now failed to win any of their opening 14 games in Italy's top flight.



More action from the AS Roma v Empoli match from last weekend.



Roma's superstar Francesco Totti scored a double against Empoli in their two-nil victory to stay top of the Serie A.

SIENA 0

BOLOGNA 0

Siena and Bologna had to settle for a point after a goalless stalemate at the Stadio Comunale Artemio Franchi.

Defences were always on top in the match and with neither side ever really looking like breaking the deadlock, the game remained goalless at 0-0.

The draw leaves Bologna still searching for their first away win of the campaign, and keeps mid-table Siena four points ahead of Bologna on 15 for the season.

FIXTURES

Tuesday 6th January

1Roma	14	11	3	0	31	4	36
2Juventus	14	9	3	2	31	15	30
3Milan	13	9	3	1	22	6	30
4Inter	14	8	4	2	25	9	28
5Lazio	14	9	1	4	23	17	28
6Parma	14	7	3	4	22	18	24
7Udinese	14	7					



ENGLISH



TOTTENHAM 1

MANCHESTER UTD 2

United went top of the league after a straight forward win over Spurs, who only really threatened in the last 30 minutes.

Defender John O'Shea poked the champions ahead following a 16th minute corner and Ruud van Nistelrooy doubled the lead with a deflected shot seven minutes later.

Gus Poyet pulled one back in the 63rd minute and though they livened up after that, United held out comfortably.

SOUTHAMPTON 3

PORTSMOUTH 0

The first league meeting between the south coast rivals since 1988 was a one-sided affair as Southampton moved up to fourth in the table.

Jason Dodd opened the scoring direct from a corner, although Portsmouth's French defender Sébastien Schemmel appeared to get the final touch.

Latvian Marian Pahars scored his first goal for 15 months midway through the second half and James Beattie wrapped up the points with a last-minute header.

FULHAM 0

CHELSEA 1

Argentinean striker Hernán Crespo scored in the 62nd minute to give Chelsea a narrow 1-0 victory at neighbours Fulham to move level with Arsenal on points, goal difference and goals scored.

Damien Duff was forced off with what looked like a shoulder injury when he fell awkwardly under a challenge from Sean Davis in the early stages and it took the visitors until just after the hour to break the deadlock.

Hernan Crespo headed the only goal of the game to end a run of two defeats in a row for Claudio Ranieri's side.

BOLTON 1

ARSENAL 1

Bolton Wanderers scored a late equaliser against Arsenal to leave the London level with Chelsea but trailing Manchester United heading into a full slate of matches on Boxing Day.

Goalkeeper Jussi Jaaskelainen seemed to have kept out Fredrik Ljungberg's 57th-minute shot



Bolton's Henrik Pedersen lashes home the equaliser against Arsenal with an unstoppable left foot drive.

for Arsenal, but Robert Pires was on hand to tap in the loose ball.

However, in-form Henrik Pedersen capped off a marvellous week by levelling matters seven minutes from the end against their unbeaten visitors, just days after grabbing the winner against Southampton in midweek to steer the club into the semi-finals of the Carling Cup.

CHARLTON 0

NEWCASTLE UTD 0

Charlton's sloppy finishing ensured they failed to leapfrog Newcastle after creating a handful of chances against Sir Bobby Robson's side at The Valley.

Charlton's Jason Euell was the main reason it finished scoreless, the striker missing three good chances against Newcastle, hitting the post on one occasion with Shay Given beaten.

Before this game the 26-year-old marksman had scored just three goals from 15 appearances and his lack of form was on full display against the Magpies, who will be wondering how they managed to leave London with a point following a disappointing display.

EVERTON 3

LEICESTER CITY 2

Wayne Rooney was Everton's super sub for the second week running as he helped David Moyes' side come from behind to secure all three points against struggling Leicester.

Rooney, who came off the bench to score the winner against Portsmouth last week, was brought on just after the hour mark with his side trailing 2-1 to Les Ferdinand's stunning free-kick and James Scowcroft's 58th-minute header.

The England international levelled the scores less than 10 minutes later and Tomasz Radzinski fired the winner after 79 minutes to ease the Toffees away from the relegation zone.

BLACKBURN 0

ASTON VILLA 2

Aston Villa secured a rare away victory at

Ewood Park, increasing the pressure on Blackburn boss Graeme Souness.

Stefan Moore and Juan Pablo Angel fired Aston Villa to their first Premiership away win for almost a year as Blackburn paid the price for a series of blunders.

Rovers had already escaped with the skin of their teeth from a couple of mistakes at a wet and slippery Ewood Park when Lee Hendrie took advantage of defensive dithering to set up Moore for an easy goal.

Angel then made sure of their first league away win since January 28 - the last one was 15 away trips previously, a 5-2 triumph at Middlesbrough - as Blackburn's defence failed to cut out a threatening cross and the Colombian pounced to fire home.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Blackburn 0 Aston Villa 2, Bolton 1 Arsenal 1, Charlton 0 Newcastle Utd 0, Everton 3 Leicester City 2, Fulham 0 Chelsea 1, Southampton 3 Portsmouth 0, Tottenham 1, Manchester Utd 2, Wolverhampton vs Liverpool, Birmingham City vs Middlesbrough Postponed

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	17	13	1	3	34	11	40
Arsenal	17	11	6	0	31	12	39
Chelsea	17	12	3	2	31	12	39
Southampton	17	7	5	5	18	12	26
Fulham	17	7	4	6	28	22	25
Newcastle	17	6	7	4	25	20	25
Charlton	17	6	6	5	22	20	24
Birmingham	16	6	5	5	14	18	23
Liverpool	16	6	4	6	23	18	22
Bolton	17	5	7	5	17	23	22
Everton	17	5	5	7	20	22	20
Middlesbrough	16	5	5	6	12	15	20
Aston Villa	17	5	5	7	16	23	20
Man City	16	5	4	7	23	22	19
Tottenham	17	5	3	9	19	26	18
Blackburn	17	5	2	10	23	27	17
Leicester	17	4	4	9	25	28	16
Portsmouth	17	4	4	9	18	25	16
Leeds	16	4	3	9	16	36	15
Wolverhampton	16	2	5	9	13	35	11

FIRST DIVISION

Bradford 0 Rotherham 2, Cardiff 1 Millwall 3, Coventry 1 West Bromwich 0, Crewe 2 Wigan 3, Preston 5, Burnley 3, Reading 0 Crystal Palace 3, Sunderland 2, Wimbledon 1, Walsall 1 West Ham 1, Watford 1 Stoke 3, Ipswich 0 Norwich 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Norwich	24	13	7	4	36	21	46
West Brom	24	13	6	5	35	21	45
Sheff Utd	23	12	5	6	37	26	41
Wigan	24	11	8	5	33	25	41
Ipswich	24	11	6	7	43	34	39
West Ham	24	9	11	4	32	21	38
Preston	24	11	5	8	38	29	38
Sunderland	24	10	8	6	29	22	38
Reading	24	11	4	9	29	29	37
Cardiff	24	9	8	7	41	32	35
Millwall	24	8	9	7	27	24	33
Coventry	24	7	11	6	30	30	32
Crewe	24	9	5	10	29	31	32
Walsall	24	7	9	6	26	26	31
Rotherham	24	7	9	8	22	29	30
Stoke	24	8	5	11	31	33	29
Nottingham Forest	23	7	7	9	34	32	28
Burnley	24	7	7	10	36	43	28
Crystal Palace	24	7	7	10	29	38	28
Gillingham	23	7	6	10	28	36	27
Watford	24	6	8	10	26	32	26
Derby	23	5	8	10	24	36	23
Bradford	24	4	5	15	9	36	17
Wimbledon	24	4	2	18	24	52	14

SECOND DIVISION

Brentford 0 Swindon 2, Bristol City 1 Stockport 0, Hartlepool 0 Colchester 0, Luton 0 Barnsley 1, Oldham 2, QPR 1, Peterborough 3 Rushden & D'monds 1, Plymouth 3 Notts County 0, Sheff Wed 0 Chesterfield 0, Tranmere 1, Brighton 0, Wycombe 2 Bournemouth 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Plymouth	22	12	7	3	48	25	43
QPR	22	11	8	3	40	17	41
Barnsley	22	10	7	5	30	26	37
Brighton	22	10	5	7	32	25	35
Colchester	22	10	5	7	26	28	35
Bristol City	22	8	10	4	27	18	34
Luton	22	9	6	7	34	34	33
Hartlepool	22	8	8	6	33	28	32
Bournemouth	22	8	8	6	28	25	32
Port Vale	21	9	5	7	27	26	32
Swindon	22	8	7	7	31	27	31
Wrexham	21	9	4	8	24	22	31
Blackpool	21	9	3	9	25	28	30
Rushden & D'monds	22	8	5	9	37	36	29
Tranmere	22	7	8	7	23	30	29
Gainsby	21	7	6	8	25	28	27
Sheff Wed	22	6	9	7	24	27	27
Brentford	22	8	3	11	24	33	27
Oldham	22	6	8	8	33	34	26
Peterborough	22	5	8	9	27	32	23
Stockport	22	4	9	9	28	37	21
Notts County	22	5</td					

German Bundesliga

Brazilian striker Ailton's 16th goal of the season after three minutes helped Werder stay four points clear of the field following their 3-0 win over Rostock.

The northerners struggled at times but made the most of their few chances. French defender Valerien Ismael and Hungarian midfielder Krisztian Lisztes wrapped up the victory with goals after the break.

Two goals from Dutch striker Roy Makaay helped champions Bayern move up to second with their biggest away win since a 7-1 victory at Borussia Moenchengladbach in 1979.

Midfielders Martin Demichelis and Hasan Salihamidzic plus forwards Claudio Pizarro and Piotr Trochowski also scored in Bayern's 6-0 drubbing of Freiburg.

Cologne moved off the bottom of the table with a comfortable 3-0 home win over Hertha Berlin, their first win since former Swiss international Marcel Koller took over as coach last month.

Ukraine forward Andriy Voronin opened the scoring from close range two minutes into the second half.

FIXTURES

Saturday 31st January 2004

Bochum	vs	Wolfsburg
1860 Munich	vs	Kaiserslautern
FC Cologne	vs	M. glaßbach
Werder Bremen	vs	Hertha Berlin
VFB Stuttgart	vs	Hansa Rostock
Freiburg	vs	B. Leverkusen
E. Frankfurt	vs	B. Munich
Hannover	vs	Hamburg SV
B. Dortmund	vs	Schalke



Bayern Munich's Martin Demichelis celebrates after scoring one of Bayern's six goals against Freiburg.

Hertha were reduced to 10 men when striker Nando Rafael was sent off for a dangerous tackle in the 72nd minute before the hosts capitalised in their numerical advantage with Lucas Podolski and fellow striker Matthias Scherz both finding the net to secure full points.

Stuttgart dropped to fourth place after suffering a 2-3 home loss to Bayer Leverkusen, their second consecutive defeat after losing 1-0 to champions Bayern Munich.

Bulgaria striker Dimitar Berbatov was instrumental in third-placed Leverkusen's convincing win with two of their goals. Defender Carsten Ramelow opened the scoring for the visitors, before Berbatov's first of the night made it 2-0 at the break.

Germany striker Kevin Kuranyi pulled one back in the 56th minute before setting up midfielder Zvonimir Soldo for Stuttgart's second goal.

Surprise package Bochum held on to fifth by twice coming back from a goal down to earn a 2-2 draw with Hanover courtesy of a spectacular header from Iran striker Vahid Hashemian in the 75th minute.

Striker Thomas Brdaric put the home side in front with an angled effort from inside the box in the 18th minute however a blunder by the Bochum defence helped Denmark forward Peter Madsen equalise eight minutes into the second half.

Dortmund enters the winter break without a win in their last six games after a 1-1 home draw with Kaiserslautern.

Giant Czech striker Jan Koller put the hosts ahead from close range against the run of play just before the break.

Kaiserslautern kept trying and were rewarded when Brazilian midfielder Lincoln equalised in the 76th minute after Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Weidenfeller failed to catch a high ball.

A header by striker Arie van Lent with seven minutes left gave Moenchengladbach a 1-2 win over 1860, their first victory over 1860 in Munich in 34 years.

Czech midfielder Ivo Ulich put the visitors ahead with a volley from just inside the area on 16 minutes but the Munich side responded in the 62nd minute through Germany striker Benjamin Lauth.

Schalke's run of three straight victories came to a halt with a 1-1 draw with Wolfsburg.

Midfielder Hamit Altintop opened the scoring for the Gelsenkirchen club from close range in the 26th minute. The visitors levelled five minutes from the break courtesy of Bulgaria striker Martin Petrov.

Finally Eintracht Frankfurt dropped to the bottom of the standings after a 2-3 home loss at the hands of Hamburg, despite recovering from two goals down after missing a penalty with a minute left.

Hamburg midfielder Stefan Beinlich and Japan

striker Naohiro Takahara put the visitors 2-0 up after 52 minutes but Eintracht fought back through Albania midfielder Ervin Skela and striker Markus Beierle.

Bosnia midfielder Sergej Barbarez got the winner for Hamburg with a header five minutes from time. Skela then missed the penalty that could have given his side a share of the points.

The German Bundesliga is now in a Winter Break and will resume on campaign resumes on January 31.

Hanover 2 Bochum 2, Stuttgart 2 Bayer Leverkusen 3, 1860 Munich 1 Moenchengladbach 2, Dortmund 1 Kaiserslautern 1, Schalke 1 Wolfsburg 1, Eintracht Frankfurt 2 Hamburg 3, Freiburg 0, Bayern Munich 6, Werder Bremen 3 Hansa Rostock 0, Cologne 3 Hertha Berlin 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Bremen	17	12	3	2	45	20	39
2 Bayern	17	10	5	2	40	19	35
3 Leverkusen	17	10	5	2	34	17	35
4 Stuttgart	17	10	5	2	24	7	35
5 Bochum	17	7	5	5	30	22	26
6 Dortmund	17	7	4	6	29	25	25
7 Wolfsburg	17	8	1	8	35	32	25
8 Schalke	17	6	6	5	23	23	24
9 Hamburg	17	6	5	6	23	29	23
10 Freiburg	17	6	3	8	24	37	21
11 Hannover	17	5	5	7	30	37	20
12 Hansa	17	5	4	8	24	27	19
13 M. glaßbach	17	5	4	8	18	24	19
14 1860 Munich	17	5	4	8	18	26	19
15 Kaiserslautern	17	5	3	9	20	31	15
16 Köln	17	3	4	10	15	26	13
17 Hertha Berlin	17	2	7	8	15	33	13
18 Eintracht	17	3	3	11	16	28	12



Spanish Primera Liga

Real Madrid's go into the winter break two points clear at the summit after a 1-3 victory at Real Mallorca.

The islanders were gifted an 11th-minute lead when Francisco Pavon made a hash of clearing the ball, a mistake that resulted in Samuel Eto'o setting up Fernando Correa to slide the ball past 'keeper Iker Casillas.

Homegrown striker Raul drew Real level on the stroke of half-time before Ronaldo and Luis Figo wrapped up the win with second-half goals.

Ronaldo continued his impressive goalscoring run with Real's second after 55 minutes before Figo added the third from the penalty spot in the 68th minute.

Valencia did just enough to scratch out a 1-0 home win against a stubborn Sevilla side.

Sevilla's outstanding defence kept Valencia at bay in the first half but Rafa Benitez's side gradually increased the pressure and clinched the points with Mista's header from a Vicente corner after 62 minutes.

FIXTURES

Sunday 4th January 2004

Valencia	vs	Villarreal
Valladolid	vs	Betis
Málaga	vs	R. Sociedad
R. Madrid	vs	Murcia
Espanyol	vs	Mallorca
Celta	vs	Deportivo
Racing	vs	Barcelona
Zaragoza	vs	Atlético
Athletic	vs	Osasuna
Sevilla	vs	Albacete



Valencia's Carlos Marchena (right) sticks his leg out as Sevilla's Julio Baptista attempts to head the ball away.

Real Sociedad, championship runners-up to Real Madrid last term, slipped further into relegation danger when they were beaten 3-1 at home to Valladolid.

Real Sociedad were whistled off by their own fans after an eighth defeat of the season left them 18th in

the table. The Basque side started well against Valladolid, taking the lead through Turkish international forward Nihat Kahveci after five minutes.

Valladolid equalised on the half-hour through Ariza Makukula and took the lead in the 72nd minute when Oscar finished off a swift break from defence.

Valladolid wrapped up victory with a Roberto Losada goal four minutes from time.

Atletico Madrid also had a disappointing home result as Racing Santander held on for a 2-2 draw.

Atletico led 2-1 with 10 minutes to go after Veljko Paunovic and Kizito Musampa had both struck on the rebound in response to Sergio Matabuena's scrappy opener, but Racing clinched a point when Jonathan scored from the penalty spot.

Third-placed Deportivo La Coruna kept up the pressure on Valencia and Real by grinding out a 2-1 win against Espanyol, who remain rooted to the bottom of the table.

It was anything but easy for Depor, who had to come from a goal behind before claiming all three points thanks to an own goal from Moreno Torricelli.

Espanyol took the lead after 16 minutes thanks to a goal from Jordi Cruyff, but the home side were back on level terms in the dying seconds of the first period thanks to a strike from Albert Luque.

Torricelli put the ball through his own net 20 minutes into the second half to give the hosts a lead that they never looked like they would squander.

Real Betis' terrible home form showed no sign of abating on the eve of the winter break as they lost 3-1 in the last two minutes, Antonio Guayre striking twice to hand Villarreal all three points.

The contest was nicely poised entering the closing stages after Betis' Juanito cancelled out Sonny Anderson's opener.

The hosts, who had Alejandro Lembo sent off after 76 minutes, battled manfully to make sure the dismissal didn't play too great a part in the eventual outcome.

And it seemed to have worked until Guayre scored after 88 minutes and then again two minutes later.

David Villa struck the only goal of the match from the penalty spot to hand Real Zaragoza a surprise win at Osasuna.

Malaga ensured their supporters would enjoy a merry Christmas by grabbing a last-minute 1-2 victory at struggling Murcia.

Valencia 1 Sevilla 0, Real Sociedad 1 Valladolid 3, Atletico Madrid 2 Racing Santander 2, Albacete 1 Athletic Bilbao 1, Deportivo 2 Espanyol 1, Osasuna 0 Zaragoza 1, Real Betis 1 Villarreal 3, Real Murcia 1 Malaga 2, Mallorca 1 Real Madrid 3, Barcelona 1 Celta Vigo 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Real Madrid	17	12	3	2	36	18	39
2 Valencia	17	11	4	2	31	12	37
3 Deportivo	17	10	3	4	26	14	33
4 Osasuna	17	7	6	4	18	13	27
5 Villarreal	17	7	6	4	20	17	27
6 Atletico	17	8	3	6	23	22	27
7 Málaga	17	8	2	7	23	20	26
8 Athletic	17	7	4	6	22	20	25
9 Barcelona	17	6	6	5	23	22	24
10 Valladolid	17	6	6	5	22	23	24
11 Mallorca	17	7	2	8	21	28	23
12 Sevilla	17	5	6	6	24	21	21
13 Racing	17	6	4	7	20	25	21
14 Albacete	17	6	2	9	21	22	20
15 Zaragoza	17	5	4	8	18	21	19
16 Betis	17	4	6	7	21	22	18
17 Celta	17	3	8	6	22</		



Dutch Eredivisie

Ajax's miserable end to 2003 was capped at Twente Enschede as Ronald Koeman's men went into the winter break on the back of a shock 2-0 defeat.

Just days after they crashed out of the Amstel Cup with a 1-0 home defeat to NAC Breda, a Blaise N'Kufo double for Enschede ensured the Amsterdam club would start the new year level on points with rivals PSV Eindhoven, however they do have a game in hand.

PSV's first came seven minutes before the interval, and the striker then sealed the 2-0 victory with a second on the hour. Vitesse Arnhem held out for over an hour with only 10 men to earn a goalless draw with PSV Eindhoven.

PSV started the game a point adrift of leaders Ajax and having played a game more, so a three-point haul would have been foremost in the mind of coach Guus Hiddink. And things swung PSV's way when Vitesse midfielder Aleksandar Rankovic was handed his marching orders in the 26th minute for picking up a second yellow card. But even with a man advantage PSV were unable to find the breakthrough and saw two valuable points slip away.

Feyenoord failed to close the gap on the Eredivisie's top three after a goalless draw at RKC Waalwijk. Bert van Marwijk's side have been notoriously inconsistent during the first half of the season and they showed little improvement at the Mandemakers stadium.

The Rotterdam giants stay in fourth place, nine points behind joint leaders - and traditional title rivals Ajax and PSV - while they are also four adrift of third-placed AZ Alkmaar.

Heerenveen ended 2003 with a sixth home victory in eight matches this season to see of Roda JC 2-1.

Georgios Samaras set them on

Vitesse 0 PSV Eindhoven 0, NAC Breda 3 RBC Roosendaal 2, Heerenveen 2 Roda JC 1, NEC Nijmegen 1 Zwolle 0, Twente 2 Ajax 0, Groningen 1 Willem II 2, Utrecht 3 Volendam 0, RKC Waalwijk 0 Feyenoord 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Ajax	15	12	1	2	39	16	37
2 PSV	16	11	4	1	44	13	37
3 Alkmaar	16	10	2	4	34	17	32
4 Feyenoord	16	8	4	4	30	21	28
5 Willem II	16	8	3	5	26	24	27
6 Heerenveen	16	8	2	6	20	19	26
7 Twente	16	8	1	7	31	28	25
8 Utrecht	16	7	4	5	21	18	25
9 Roda	15	5	6	4	26	19	21
10 Roosendaal	16	5	6	5	16	18	21
11 Groningen	16	5	5	6	22	25	20
12 NEC	16	6	1	9	19	27	19
13 NAC	16	5	3	8	25	25	18
14 Waalwijk	16	4	5	7	19	22	17
15 Volendam	16	3	4	9	17	44	13
16 Vitesse	16	2	7	7	23	30	13
17 Den Haag	16	2	4	10	12	35	10
18 Zwolle	16	1	4	11	9	32	7

GREEK ETHNIKI KATIGORIA

Olympiakos maintained their four-point lead in the Hellenic National League after ending Egaleo 12-match unbeaten streak with a dramatic 2-1 away win.

Giovanni became the first player to ten league goals this



Olympiakos striker Giovanni became the first player to ten league goals this season after scoring against Egaleo.

season after a fine individual effort on 15 minutes gave Olympiakos the lead.

Anestis Agritis turned in Nikos Nikolopoulos's pass to equalise in the 67th minute, but soon after Egaleo's Daniel Eduseh was dismissed for violent conduct. And the champions made the one-man advantage count in added time when Giorgios Georgiadis head in, Egaleo

1 Ionikos 2 OFI 0, Iraklis 3 Xanthi 0, PAOK 3 Aris 0, Panathinaikos 6 Paniliakos 3, Egaleo 1 Olympiakos 2, Proodeftiki 0 Panionios 3, Akratitos 2 Halkidona 4, AEK Athens 1 Kallithea 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Olympiacos	15	12	2	1	34	9	38
2 Panathinaikos	15	10	4	1	30	11	34
3 PAOK	15	10	2	3	25	13	32
4 Egaleo	15	9	3	3	19	10	30
5 AEK	15	8	4	3	32	15	28
6 Iraklis	15	6	4	5	20	17	22
7 Panionios	15	5	6	4	23	18	21
9 OFI	15	5	3	7	15	26	18
10 Xanthi	15	4	4	7	15	22	16
11 Ionikos	15	4	3	8	19	25	15
12 Paniliakos	15	3	5	7	23	29	14
13 Aris	15	3	3	9	13	25	12
14 Kallithea	15	1	8	6	20	24	11
15 Proodeftiki	15	1	6	8	9	25	9
16 Akratitos	15	1	4	10	14	42	7

then reduced to nine men when Nikolopoulos's dissent saw him sent off.

Panathinaikos consolidated second place following a lively 6-3 victory at home to Paniliakos. Giannis Goumas gave Panathinaikos the lead but Giannis Thomaidis soon equalised.

Angelos Basinas converted a penalty late in the half to again put Panathinaikos in front, but eight minutes after the break Thomaidis scored again.

However, two goals within two minutes just after the hour from Basinas and Joël Epallé restored the home team's advantage, and even though René Henriksen put through his own goal to make it 4-3, Basinas then completed the first hat-trick of his career and Miltos Sapanis headed the clincher in added time.

PAOK moved ahead of Egaleo into the third and final UEFA Champions League berth thanks to a 3-0 derby win against Aris Thessaloniki.

AEK Athens are still in fifth after a 1-1 draw against Kallithea.

Lowly Kallithea, coached for the first time by Panagiotis Lemonis, secured a deserved draw four minutes from the end through Nikos Skarmoutsos in a match played on neutral territory due to crowd trouble at AEK's match with Olympiakos.

Iraklis' fine form under recently-appointed coach Mats Jingblad continued with a 3-0 win against Xanthi.

Panionios triumphed 3-0 at Proodeftiki, while also winning on their scoreline.

Ionikos gained three vital points by beating OFI Crete 2-0.

Celtic remain eight-points clear at the top of the Scottish Premier League as goals from John Hartson and Alan Thompson gave them a 2-0 victory over Motherwell.

Hartson opened the scoring just two minutes at Fir Park when he fired home at the back post after Thompson's cross had taken a slight deflection off Scott Leitch.

Well had the perfect chance to level matters on the half-hour as David Clarkson went down under pressure from Johan Mjallby and referee John Underhill pointed to the spot.

But Rab Douglas saved Derek Adams' spot-kick and when Thompson curled home a lovely free-kick on 71 minutes, the Bhoys were home and dry.

Rangers came from behind to beat Hearts 2-1 at Ibrox to maintain pressure on Celtic.

Andy Kirk stunned a 49,592 crowd by scoring on 11 minutes but the champions recovered well to claim the three points with goals from Shota Arveladze (22) and Chris Burke (52).

Rangers manager Alex McLeish was relieved to return to winning form after back-to-back defeats against Panathinaikos in the Champions League and a reverse at Dunfermline Athletic.

Hearts were without their recognised defence due to injury but displayed plenty of spirit in adversity as Kirk squeezed the opener into the net with the home defence in disarray.

Hearts keeper Craig Gordon managed to block Michael Mols shot in the build-up to the equaliser but Arveladze kept his composure to head into the net.

Both sides had chances to claim a second in an often frantic encounter but 20-year-old winger Burke netted the winner with a tap-in from Mols's delivery.

Livingston surged into the top half of the table by ending their poor run with a 3-0 win against Kilmarnock.

Livi had failed to register a win over Killie in their last four league attempts, but an impressive second-half display saw them take the three points back to West Lothian.

Juanjo Camacho - a half-time substitute - netted four minutes after coming on to get the ball rolling.

Fernando Pasquini fired

Aberdeen 2 Dundee 2, Kilmarnock 0 Livingston 3, Rangers 2 Hearts 1, Hibernian 1 Dunfermline 2, Motherwell 0 Celtic 2, Dundee Utd vs Partick Thistle - Postponed.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1 Celtic	17	16	1	0	53	7	49
2 Rangers	17	13	2	2	41	15	41
3 Hearts	17	9	2	6	26	22	29
4 Dunfermline	17	8	5	4	22	21	29
5 Livingston	17	5	6	6	18	19	21
6 Motherwell	17	5	5	7	17	21	20
7 Kilmarnock	17	6	2	9	23	36	20
8 Hibernian	17	5	4	8	17	25	19
9 Dundee	17	4	6	7	20	23	18
10 Dundee United	16	4	4	8	15	29	16
11 Aberdeen	17	4	3	10	19	32	15
12 Partick	16	1	2	13	13	34	5



Hearts forward Paul Hartley (right) bursts past Rangers opponents.

CH else SEA 2003

